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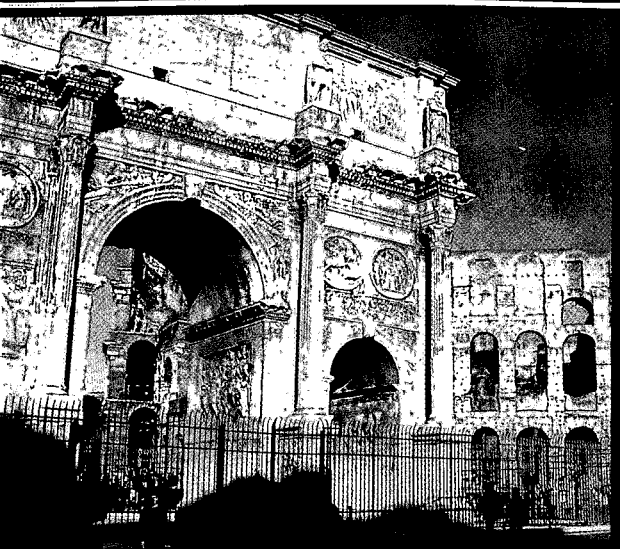

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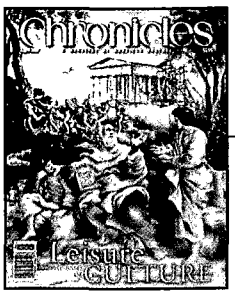
Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE



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On Moral Britain

My thanks to Derek Turner for his generous and insightful review ("The Decivilizing Century") of my book *The Strange Death of Moral Britain* in the June 2007 issue of *Chronicles*. There are, however, two minor points that need to be corrected.

First, Mr. Turner suggests that I avoided ascribing the extremely large rise in crime, illegitimacy, and drink and drug abuse in Britain between 1955 and 1995 to immigration because of a squeamishness about mentioning race. The reason I did not do so was because any such effect was far less important than the factors I do discuss—namely, the decline of a Protestant-based moral culture and the creation of a centralized welfare state. As I document in the text, the rise and subsequent fall of "moral Britain" followed essentially the same trajectory in Wales and in the northeast of England, which have received very few new immigrants, as it did in the rest of England, where they have settled in large numbers. In any case, although some groups among the new immigrants, such as the Jamaicans, do have very high crime rates, other substantial groups, such as the Hindus and Sikhs, are far more law-abiding, have greater family stability, and are far less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol than the indigenous Anglo-Celtic population.

The second point relates to male homosexuals, the family, and demography. Before the 1980's, many arguments were used in Britain to justify the legal constraints on the behavior of male homosexuals, but it was never claimed that they were a threat to family life or to the birthrate. The collapse of family life in Britain in the last half of the 20th century had many causes, including liberalism, welfarism, and feminism; homosexuality was not one of them. The fall in the birthrate in Britain, Spain, and Italy is because heterosexual couples have too few children; in Denmark, where homosexuality is well tolerated, couples have larger families. My very recent research on why royal dynasties (whose lineage is vital) die out does not indicate that male homosexuality has been an important factor. For royalty, the bottom of the page does not mean the end of the line.

Finally, let me add that the reason that I do not provide solutions in my book to the social problems that I have described is that I do not know what the solutions are. The "moral Britain" of the late 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries was created not by design but by the independent actions of many individuals and groups who took it for granted that men and women are autonomous moral beings responsible for their own behavior. Unless and until those assumptions again pervade British society, no significant improvement will take place. The great curse of our time in Britain, as in America, is the pursuit of social justice instead of justice, and the emphasis on equality rather than desert. How do you change that?

The only positive government interventions in modern Britain that have ever led to a fall in crime have been the heavy taxing of, and the drastic restrictions on, the sale of alcohol that took place during and after World War I. The relative fall in the price of alcohol and the dismantling of the restrictions on its sale are probably the single biggest factor that has once again made England—and, even more so, Scotland—a very violent society. It is up to the British to decide whether they want a low rate of violent crime or a free market in alcohol.

—Christie Davies
Reading, England

Mr. Turner Replies:

It is pleasant to have one's arguments treated seriously by so impressive a person as Professor Davies. However, I did not actually ascribe "the extremely large rise in crime, illegitimacy, and drink and drug abuse in Britain between 1955 and 1995 to immigration"; I merely said that it is an important factor that he had not discussed. I did not even suggest it was a more powerful factor than the decline in religious belief, the advent of the welfare state, or the rise of antinomian popular culture. But it is an important factor—not just because of the high crime rates associated with certain ethnic minorities, but because the unrequested presence of millions of immigrants and their descendants in Britain has, in my view, been a major factor in causing lasting resentment and destroying "the identification

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with religion and country" that Professor Davies correctly views as so important. Successive governments, whether nominally Conservative or theoretically interested in social harmony, have presided over an enormous and probably permanent demographic change, without ever bothering to consult the electorate whose world they were altering. In this great and avoidable betrayal, they have been aided by all the agencies of the "establishment," which has, in turn, helped to engender distrust of the powers that be. That this was more because of myopia than of malice is irrelevant; the point is that the Britain that fought and won World War II has been made unrecognizable. Patriotism is an elemental emotion, based largely on atavistic notions of commonalty through consanguinity and shared culture; mass immigration has helped to break a quasi-mystical link between past and present.

I fear I must not have made myself clear regarding homosexuality. I have a relaxed view on the subject: Homosexuals are "born that way," so it would be unjust to persecute them. However, it is not difficult to see why patriarchs (or matriarchs—but matriarchs are always more willing to overlook children's peccadilloes) of families would not exactly be delighted to have homosexual children, because it means that their line is likelier to become extinct. "Family values"—if that vague and clichéd term means anything at all—concern future generations as much as the present one. Family life, like national life, is a line stretching back into the dim but somehow specific past and onward into an unknowable but somehow specific future. Responsible mothers and fathers want to bring up their children well, not just so they can contribute positively to society, but so they, too, can have healthy and useful children.

Lastly, Professor Davies says that he does not provide answers because he does not know what those answers are. Whilst admiring his candor and distaste for easy answers, I must nonetheless reprehend his metaphorical shrug of the shoulders. Mainstream conservatism has failed in the postwar period because of its unwillingness to provide positive answers to serious questions. It is not enough simply to cry "*Après moi la déluge*!" and luxuriate in the feeling that they shall not see our like again.

The problem lies with Professor Davies' understandable distrust of government. Yet in this age of religious disbelief, what other regulating mechanism can there be? He knows that governments could make a positive difference in regard to antisocial behavior—and says alcohol should be more tightly controlled. (Who could disagree?) Someone of his keen intellect must also be able to comprehend that tax breaks for families and the proper punishment of criminals would make an enormous and almost instantaneous difference—and would, furthermore, be electorally popular. If only we had a Conservative Party willing to face up to the moral-relativist mafia!

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by Wayne Allensworth

Children of a Lesser God?

The plight of Iraq's Christian community—as followers of the Prince of Peace flee from the country they have lived in since ancient times, their homes and churches burned, their children kidnapped and raped, their priests murdered—has elicited barely any reaction from either the White House or the Muslim government it supports. The destruction of the world's oldest Christian community, something *Chronicles* had foreseen even before the invasion of Iraq, has continued apace since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's relatively tolerant secular regime, with the murder of a Catholic priest and three deacons on June 3 the latest depressing chapter in the story of a militant Islam unleashed by the war.

Patriarch Emmanuel III Delly of the Chaldean Catholic Church condemned the latest murders as

> a most horrible act against God, against humanity, against their own brothers who are peace loving citizens, as well as men of religion who always offered their prayers to God the Almighty for security and stability in Iraq.

According to media reports, a car carrying the men, as well as the wife of one of the deacons, was stopped by Muslim gunmen on the streets of Mosul. The woman was ordered out of the car, then the gunmen shot the priest and his companions repeatedly. The car was booby-trapped, and the bodies could not be removed until security forces defused the explosives later that evening. The priest had just left the church where he had celebrated Sunday Mass.

The Chaldean Church's bishops issued a statement to ask

> the Lord to grant mercy to the souls of these martyrs, and extend their deepest sympathies to the families of the deceased . . . that they may be given the necessary strength to face such an arduous situation.

The bishops asked "Iraqi leaders and international organizations to intervene to put a concrete end to these criminal acts."

This was not the first appeal for aid by Christian leaders. In May, Patriarch Mar Dinka IV of the Assyrian Church of the East and Patriarch Emmanuel issued a joint statement, a plea for help in which they stated that Christians have faced "blackmail, kidnapping and displacement."

Pope Benedict XVI condemned the killings as well—and brought up the plight of Iraq's Christians at a private Vatican meeting with President George W. Bush. Nevertheless, the White House's previous silence and inaction indicates that the pontiff likely experienced the arrogance, willful ignorance, and empty promises we have grown used to from "The Decider."

Meanwhile, the reality-based community can treat itself to a host of news reports on the activities of Iraq's *jihadis* in May and June. For example, a Christian couple working at the U.S. embassy was reported kidnapped: Both the husband and the wife were eventually murdered. A Sunni group calling itself the Islamic State in Iraq claimed credit for the martyrdoms: "God's ruling has been implemented against two of the most prominent agents and spies of the worshippers of the cross . . . The swords of the security personnel of the Islamic State in Iraq" are, according to the statement, "slitting the throats of crusaders and their aides and lackeys."

Both Shiite and Sunni militants, usually busy fighting each other, have joined in the *jihad* against Iraq's Christians. At the end of May, the Mahdi Army, a Shiite group affiliated with Muqtada al-Sadr, judged by some observers as a major (perhaps *the* major) threat to security and stability in occupied Iraq, circulated a letter calling for Christian women to wear the Islamic veil. According to Iraqi Christians, several women have been beheaded for refusing to follow Muslim customs.

Muslim militants have demanded that the remaining Christians (many had already fled) in the Al-Durah area of Baghdad pay *jizya*, a head tax on non-Muslims living under Islamic rule, or submit to conversion. Other press accounts have Muslims confiscating fleeing Christians' property and imposing an "exit tax" as well. Many Christians had already signed over property to the enterprising *jihadis* as ransom for kidnapped relatives.

St. George's Assyrian Church in the Baghdad neighborhood of Dora was burned to the ground in May. (By one count, 27 churches have been destroyed since 2003.) Christians had earlier been given an ultimatum to convert or pay the *jizya*. Those wishing to remain would be allowed to stay—if they pledged a daughter or sister in marriage to a Muslim.

This is only a small sampling of the stories coming out of Iraq—stories that include a report of a Christian boy being crucified, of Christians being beheaded, raped, and robbed.

Iraq's frustrated Christian leaders have lashed out at the United States, which has lent little in the way of aid to the beleaguered Christians. In early June, Patriarch Emmanuel condemned the occupation of a Chaldean Catholic theological institute, Babel College, by U.S. forces. Babel College was occupied without the consent of church leaders, and the Chaldeans say the takeover is fueling further reprisals against Christians. (Christians have long been identified with the West, especially the United States, by the *jihadis*, whether they have aided the Americans or not.) Their anger is all the more bitter since some had expected aid from an historically Christian superpower. One account quotes Patriarch Emmanuel as saying that U.S. and Iraqi officials "have insulted and humiliated our temples and churches."

Journalist Felicity Arbuthnot has sympathetically chronicled the plight of Iraq's minorities (including Christians, Zoroastrians, Mandeans, and Yazidis) and the destruction of the country's historic sites in the turmoil that is post-Saddam Iraq. In a recent article, she raised a question all decent Americans should ask ourselves:

> Nearly every report on [U.S.] soldiers or their families refers to their unwavering faith in God sustaining them in their missions and if they become casualties, belief they

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> are now with their Maker. Are Iraqi Christians, established in Iraq since the time of Christ, children of a lesser God?

Arbuthnot condemns the senseless destruction the invasion brought on this, "the cradle of civilization," and its priceless historic sites. Ur was the birthplace of the patriarch Abraham: Now some of Abraham's children, who were "safe under a 'tyrant,'" appear "doomed" under a "crusading army of God."

Iraq's Christian community has indeed declined rapidly since the invasion of March 2003. Most reports estimate the pre-war Christian population of Iraq at 800,000 to over a million; since then, the number has dropped by at least one half, and perhaps two thirds, as Christians have fled to Jordan, Syria, and Turkey. Some Christians, hoping to remain in the land of their ancestors, are now calling for the creation of an autonomous Christian region within Iraq on the plains of Nineveh, described by Christian journalist Sandro Magister as "the historical cradle of Christianity in Iraq," an area where village churches still use Aramaic, the language of Christ, in their liturgy. Many had already moved to the northern part of the country controlled by the Kurds—but faced persecution there, as well.

Observers have begun to use the term *genocide* to describe what is happening to non-Muslims in Iraq. Will Christians somehow be able to sustain themselves there? One journalist lamented

> the potentially irreversible loss of the indigenous Christian community in Iraq. Unless something is done and quickly, the lasting legacy of this war will be the genocide of the Christians and other minorities of Iraq.

The loss would be a huge one, not only for Christendom, but for Iraq, since Christians made up a significant portion of the country's professional class of doctors, teachers, and engineers. How could there ever be a "free and democratic Iraq" without them?

What were they thinking? I am referring not only to the neocons, who did so much to bring on this war, but the pro-war evangelical Christians in America who have enthusiastically backed this disaster and substantially continue to do so, long after the mythical weapons of mass destruction, along with the fabricated "evidence" allegedly proving Saddam was Osama bin Laden's ally, have been dropped from public statements by the likes of Secretary of State Rice and Vice President Cheney. If confronted with Arbuthnot's question, what would they say? That the Christians of Iraq are not really Christians? That they didn't count in the larger calculus of their Praise Leader President's war "to end tyranny in the world"?

Perhaps *they* are the ones who are not wholly Christian, but members of a messianic cult whose temple is Wal-Mart, their patriotic shopping trips accompanied by a sound track of "Christian rock." That they are ignorant is no excuse: Shouldn't anyone who is willing to send others to die, spreading "democracy" at the tip of a sword, be minimally acquainted with public and international affairs? Small wonder that the Founding Fathers saw mass democracy as a danger to liberty. ◇

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

THE BEST-LAID PLANS

A day or two after the signing of the Oslo Accords on September 13, 1993, I attended a meeting at a think tank in Washington to discuss the economic prospects of an independent Palestinian state. One of the speakers outlined a very economically bullish vision for the new Palestine—the West Bank plus the Gaza Strip. First, tourists would flood the area—Christian pilgrims to Bethlehem, and northern Europeans to Gaza's beaches. Commerce would probably flourish, with Palestine becoming a financial center for the Arab world. Then the Palestinians, known as the "Jews of the Arab World," and the Israelis would help transform Palestine into the "Singapore of the Middle East." At that, the audience applauded.

Indeed, during the booming and swinging years of the 1990's, everyone was applying East Asian models to forecast a productive and rosy future for their economies. Yasser Arafat envisioned the area becoming the "Hong Kong of the Middle East," a small strip of land on which hundreds of thousands of hard-working Arab and foreign entrepreneurs would lay the foundations for a world-class business center.

One of the participants in the think-tank event sounded a bit skeptical. "In theory, you might be right," he responded to the Palestine-as-Singapore proposal. After all, the Palestinians, Christians and Muslims alike, are indeed very industrious and hard-working people, more educated and cosmopolitan than those of other Arab communities. Many of the Palestinians who have immigrated to the Persian Gulf, North America, and Europe have earned multiple academic degrees and have made a lot of money. In fact, according to a recent study, Palestinian Christian citizens of Israel have the highest level of education and wealth *per capita* in the state. *In theory*, there is no reason why they and their compatriots would not be able to excel and prosper in East Jerusalem, Ramallah, or, for that matter, Gaza City. Lebanon and the emerging dynamic economic centers of Dubai and Qatar have demonstrated that there is no reason why, *in theory*, the Arab Middle East could not produce its own version of Singapore and Hong Kong. But, as the skeptic pointed out, "in theory, Congo, endowed with huge reserves of natural resources and vast potential wealth should have, by now, become one of the world's richest countries."

Unfortunately, to apply one of the most worn-out clichés in the book of Friedmanism (Tom, not Milton), when it came to Palestine and many other parts of the Arab Middle East (including even Lebanon), the Olive Tree—that symbol of nationalism, ethnicity, and religion—has overpowered the Computer Chip (economic progress). Moreover, Arafat and his cohorts of the corrupt and bloody—and worst of all, incompetent—warlords of the ruling Fatah movement are just the latest example of the way failed leaders of some national movements (the Irish, the Kurds, the Armenians, and even the Poles come to mind) can guide their people to the gates of Hell and never-ending repression and suffering, instead of to the Promised Land of freedom.

Leaders of "failed nations" refrain from sharing in the responsibility for the tragic fate of their people and like to engage in

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"victimology," blaming everything (geography, history, bad luck) and everyone (the "other," great powers, the "international community") for their misery. And sometimes, they do have a point. Forty years of "enlightened" Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, coupled with the appropriation of Palestinian land, the establishment of illegal Jewish settlements, the military repression, and the destruction of the Palestinian economy, is responsible for a great deal of the individual and collective suffering of the residents of the West Bank and Gaza. The Israelis must be faulted for their failure to get rid of the refugee camps in the occupied Arab territories and should attempt to resettle their residents. And, contrary to the conventional wisdom, the Israeli offers in the 2000 Camp David negotiations were not so "generous" as Jerusalem and Washington had spun them, and the responsibility for the failure of those talks did not fall squarely on the shoulders of the Palestinians.

The current mess in Palestine/Israel, not unlike the mess in the Persian Gulf and the Levant, has been a direct result of the Bush administration's policies and, more specifically, the contradictions between its Wilsonian pretensions of spreading political and economic freedom in the Middle East and its more calculated goals of maintaining U.S. hegemony in the region. Hence, rejecting the advice of both the Israeli government and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Washington pressed for open and free elections in Palestine. Then, to the surprise of the Bush administration, the very first one resulted in the defeat of Abbas's corrupt and ineffective Fatah party and in the triumph of Hamas, which had clearly stated its refusal to recognize Israel and its commitment to an Islamist political agenda that runs contrary to American values and interests.

Just as the elections in Iraq brought to power a Shiite regime with ties to Iran, and just as the elections in Lebanon strengthened the power of the Shiite Hezbollah, the election in Palestine handed power to the offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood that opposes the idea of peace in Israel. In response, not only did the Bush administration decide against engaging the new Hamas government in hopes of reaching interim accords, it also took steps, backed by the European Union, to isolate the Hamas government diplomatically and economically, and pressed Abbas and Fatah to form a counterbalancing center of power against Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank. And the Bush administration was certainly not supportive of an agreement between Hamas and Fatah, reached under Saudi mediation, to form a national-unity government.

Instead, the White House encouraged the Israelis to arm the security forces allied with Abbas, forces led by Fatah's Mohammed Dahlan, who lives in Gaza and who is known for his close ties to the Americans and the Israelis. Fearing an anti-Hamas insurgency led by Dahlan, in late June, Hamas security forces attacked and eventually devastated the Dahlan-led Fatah guerillas in Gaza, establishing full control in that area. That was a clear upset for the American strategy of crushing Hamas. And President Bush and his aides are now trying to spin that setback by proposing to help form the nucleus of a Western-oriented Palestinian entity led by Abbas and his Fatah faction in the West Bank, while continuing to isolate and eventually strangle Hamas-controlled Gaza.

So, yes, the Americans have exhibited a lack of even-handedness in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Bush and his neoconservative aides helped turn a bloody mess into a bloody catastrophe. At the end of the day, however, it's the ineptitude and corruption of the Palestinian "leaders" that has brought the Palestinian people to this tragic point in their history, in which Gaza City is looking less and less like Singapore and Hong Kong and more and more like Mogadishu or Grozny. This is a tragedy not only for the Palestinians but for the Israelis, who, like their Siamese twins, are doomed to share the territory of the Holy Land with them for many years to come.

—Leon Hadar

CHRISTIAN RIGHT CONSPIRACY

Paul Krugman is a professor of economics at Princeton University who, in his eagerness to obtain appointive office in a future Democratic administration, has moonlighted for some years now as a columnist for the *New York Times*, where he has worked assiduously to develop talking points for Democratic candidates. His ambition is transparent, and it is sometimes entertaining to watch him daintily avert his eyes from Clinton-era scandals while taking on the machinations of the Bush administration. (Neither of the present authors, it must be stressed, has much sympathy for the Bushies, who have striven heroically to cover themselves in something other than glory.)

Alas, however, Professor Krugman strayed far from his vocation in the dismal science with his column of April 13, 2007, entitled "For God's Sake." The target of his wrath was the temerity of the Regent University School of Law—an openly Christian law school located in Virginia Beach. Regent's crime? It succeeded in placing 150 graduates in the Bush administration. No good Ivy Leaguer can allow such bumptiousness to pass unnoticed.

The sheer uppityness of those folks at Regent probably pushed him over the edge. What else could explain the tone and tenor of the column? Professor Krugman tries to deny that he is a conspiracy theorist even while proving that the paranoid style is alive and well. Like some latter-day Joe McCarthy, Tail-Gunner Paul has here in his hand a list of 150 graduates of Regent University now working in the Bush administration. Although "the Christian right's strategy of infiltration" into the corridors of power has been set back by the administration's current political travails, Krugman ominously intones, "it would be wildly premature to declare the danger over. This is a movement that has shown great resilience over the years."

What Tail-Gunner Paul cannot stand is "the sheer extremism of these people." Why, just look at the extreme things that "these people" do! Take the new U.S. attorney for Minnesota—she's actually "in the habit of quoting Bible verses in the office." What kind of crazy country are we living in? We'd better amend the Constitution to require religious tests for federal office!

This, after all, is what Krugman is really gunning for. He may or may not have objections to allowing people with private religious convictions to serve in government. We don't know the man personally, so we can't really say. But what he wishes to forbid is the public manifestation of that belief. A Catholic who goes to Mass on Sunday may or may not be tolerable in public office, but what would be absolutely intolerable is a Catholic who takes seriously the injunctions of the Second Vatican Council. After all, *Lumen Gentium* declares that the laity are "called by God . . . [to] contribute to the sanctification of the world." And again: "All the laity . . . have the exalted duty of working for the ever greater spread of the divine

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plan of salvation to all men." And, with respect to political participation, *Gaudium et Spes* adds: "Christians . . . should be a shining example by their sense of responsibility and dedication to the common good." It is this sort of Christian, by Krugman's account, who poses a mortal danger to the Republic.

Amending the Constitution can be tough, however. So we offer a more limited proposal designed to assuage Krugman's anxieties. Let's all insist that the candidates in the next presidential election make a solemn promise never to hire anyone to work in their administrations who might conceivably be linked to the Christian Right. Surely, the threat that such "infiltrators" pose to the American Way of Life is every bit as serious as the threat from domestic communists in the depths of the Cold War.

Or maybe not. Maybe the real threat to liberty, tolerance, democracy, and peace in this country comes from people such as Paul Krugman.

—*Robert J. Delahunty & Charles J. Reid, Jr.*

STATEMENT OF CONFUSION

"Catholic Members of Congress Express Concern Over Church Sanctions," the press-release headline blared. Finally, I thought, Catholic politicians are waking up to the increasingly tight legal restrictions being brought to bear on religious groups. After all, California and New York recently passed laws that force Catholic hospitals to provide contraception as part of their health insurance, and Massachusetts drove Catholic Charities from the adoption business. Or perhaps, I hoped, they were advocating for relief of the Church abroad, in China or the Middle East. These days, strong sanctions are being imposed upon the Church and, indirectly, on those to whom She ministers.

I was wrong. It turned out that 18 esteemed Democrats (including, of course, a Kennedy—this time, Patrick of Rhode Island) had issued a publicity-grabbing nonsense "statement" that does nothing other than reiterate what should be obvious: They are not going to let Church teaching stand in the way of their ambition. The members express "concern" that Pope Benedict XVI would take seriously the Church's views on abortion and that Catholic politicians who express or support pro-choice views were risking excommunication and should be barred from Communion. While traveling to Brazil, the Pope had said as much—which was nothing more than a restatement of the Church's teaching.

The statement disingenuously proclaims solidarity with the Church's teaching on "the undesirability of abortion—we do not celebrate its practice." And here the rubes out in the pews thought the Church opposed the practice *in toto* as an evil, when all along, She just wanted no parties or banner waving in celebration of this "undesirable" practice. It must be good to be a congressperson, immune from the dictates of logic, catechesis, or common sense.

The statement concludes by saying that the "religious sanction" of excommunication or refusal of Communion "directly conflicts with our fundamental beliefs about the role and responsibility of democratic representatives in a pluralistic America." These Catholic politicians apparently believe that *vox populi*—at least as expressed in the editorial pages of the *New York Times*—really is the *vox Dei*, and that they are bound to ignore the Church and place their consciences on the shelf as long as they are in public office. Of course, this position makes no sense, as Edmund Burke long ago opined before the electors of Bristol. A representative is not a mere agent of the mass, which cannot, by its nature, be of one mind. While Burke agreed that, in general, a representative ought to put his constituents first, "[y]our representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion." For a "pluralistic" society, by definition, has people of differing views within it; such diversity of opinion does not mandate that a Catholic politician take a stance understood by his Church to be furthering error. The signatories' stirring defense of their lack of principle also contradicts their earlier invocation of a presumably nonnegotiable commitment to the "dignity of life," but this, too, has gone unnoticed.

The statement darkly intoned that the Pope's comment "also clashes with freedoms guaranteed in our Constitution." These congresspeople must be reading a different Constitution, because the one that actually exists as a governing document places no restrictions on a private institution disciplining its own members on a principle of religious belief. Indeed, some may have been excused for thinking that allowing churches to exercise their faith in such a manner was at the heart of that quaint "freedom of religion" the First Amendment was designed to protect.

Unfortunately, the Church too quickly backed away from the fight. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops was quick to assure everyone that the Pope had been misrepresented and that no one had been excommunicated. While its response did include a sentence asserting the Church's right to declare Her teachings publicly, it ended with a lukewarm call for politicians to "educate themselves about the teaching of the Church." Of course, the teaching in question is not especially obscure, and it would take little time to learn it. And at least some of the statement's signatories were educated at Catholic colleges, so they may have picked up the basics (or at least the telephone number for the theology department) that they could share with their cosigners.

And there is the rub: The members here know exactly what the teaching is and need no further "education" about it. Given these circumstances, the Church should take whatever disciplinary steps She deems necessary, in the interest of charity and pastoral care, in response to this flouting of Her teaching for political gain. Despite what the members of Congress might think, such action does not violate the Constitution—at least, not yet.

—*Gerald Russello*

OBITER DICTA

Our poet this month is **Eric Sellin**. Dr. Sellin is a retired professor of French and Francophone literatures (Temple and Tulane Universities). He has published numerous critical books and articles and some ten books of poetry in English and French, including, most recently, *Ombres de mon soleil* (2006).

Our cover art is provided by our interior artist, **George McCartney, Jr.** Mr. McCartney studied at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and received a bachelor's of art from the State University of New York at Geneseo. Since 1997, he has worked in various media in the fields of illustration, graphic design, and textiles. George currently resides in North Carolina with his wife, Kristin, and his son, William.

Our interior art is provided by **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson, our designer, received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

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by Thomas Fleming

Connoisseur of Chaos

In a spurt of avuncular generosity, I handed the young man a cigar. It was a pretty good smoke, maybe a Romeo y Julieta or a Maria Mancini I had bought for half-price. (I buy all my cigars on sale or do not buy them at all.) The polite young man thanked me, clipped the end with a cigar cutter I dug up somewhere, and, when I held out the match, he began twiddling the cigar around the flame as if he were putting the last golden touches on a marshmallow. About to burn my fingers waiting for the tomfoolery to end, I exclaimed, in the gentle tone I usually reserve for sons and editorial assistants, "What in hell do you think you are doing?"

As a smoker who has sometimes been corralled into the concentration camps known as cigar bars, I had a dim idea of what he was doing, and the young man was kind enough to raise my blood pressure even higher by going into a brief though learned explanation of this toasting ritual. He had smoked perhaps a dozen cigars in his entire life, but he had the technique down pat.

Here, from *CigarTrends.com*, is a full explanation:

> To light your cigar, first strike a match and hold it underneath the foot of the cigar to warm the tobacco. The distance should be great enough that the tip of the flame does not touch the underside of the wrapper. Roll the cigar slowly between your fingers to make sure the entire foot is evenly warmed. This will make the tobacco in the cigar more readily accept a flame.
>
> Once you have warmed the tobacco, put the cigar in your mouth at a 45° angle and use another match to light it. Hold the flame directly in front of the cigar (again, so it is not actually touching the wrapper), and slowly inhale to draw the flame to the foot of the cigar. While lighting your cigar, ensure [*sic*] that you turn the barrel so that all sides of the foot are equally lit. You may wish to lightly [*sic*] blow on the foot of the cigar to even things out and make sure your cigar continues to burn evenly.

You may also wish to politely [*sic*] kick the prissy ass down the stairs. At this point, I think I would switch to cigarettes. Better to face cancer than to warm your cigars.

I used to take some care in cutting and lighting my cigars, but the sight of the aficionados at work, many of whom have less taste in cigars than the careful young man, has driven me to biting the end off and snatching a light from a pack of cheap matches or from the kitchen stove. The performance can excite shock and awe. Once in a cigar bar, I was accosted by an importunate smoker in short sleeves who wanted to know what I was about to smoke. I showed him my Macanudo Churchill, and, as I started to bite into it, he practically leapt over my table to offer his cutter, which I not so politely declined. I already have a religion, and tobacco is not my frankincense.

Without ever subscribing to *Cigar Aficionado* or listening to Cigar Dave on the radio, I have been enjoying cigars since I first swiped my old man's cheap Harvesters and smoked them in the woods. I am afraid the average professional cigar smoker I have encountered does not even enjoy smoking, any more than wine snobs, whose greatest pleasure is talking to the wine steward, enjoy drinking wine.

I had a housemate in graduate school who wanted to pass for a cultivated gentleman. He took to reading Alexis Lichine and buying expensive wines. He invited me to dinner, along with a friend who also enjoyed good wine, and asked us to savor one of M. Lichine's top picks. "I say, gentleman," said the connoisseur after swirling a teaspoon or so over his soft palate, "that is something special." When the host left the room, my friend looked at me with a crazed smile. "Corked, isn't it?" we said almost simultaneously.

It used to be that you could take refuge in drinking whiskey. But now you cannot order a drink without hearing a pedantic discourse on single malts or single barrels. Even rum and tequila, to say nothing of gin or vodka, have put on airs and moved uptown. Yes, I have been enjoying single-malt scotches for 40 years and wrote my dissertation on Aeschylus under a known expert on Scotch, who mixed one sherry glass of scotch with one of cool but not cold water. I like the new expensive bourbons (and occasionally mix a martini with Tanqueray), but do not expect to catch me at a Knob Creek tasting. If the only way to avoid amusing chitchat about alcohol is to drink Jim Beam, then Jim Beam it is. I would have said Evan Williams, but now that the *Wine Spectator* (or some other rash of gumboils) has pronounced it the best value in bourbon, the price has gone up, and with it, the cachet.

I have nothing against the little rituals that grow up naturally around eating and drinking or hunting and fishing. I use barbless hooks in catch-and-release zones, even though I know that a trout caught after a good fight in fast water is not likely to revive when put back. It is just one of the things one does. I almost always take my salad after dinner, put the bread on the tablecloth and not on the plate, and I have learned from French and Italian friends how to sample a good wine without contorting my face into the expression of a mime pretending to choke on a golf ball. But one should not have to take a course or study a website in order to partake of a simple pleasure or practice a sport.

As Chesterton sagely observed, "If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly." Chesterton was obviously not referring to neurosurgery or theology but to skills (such as writing poetry or playing the piano) that might be perfected by a professional but can give pleasure to an amateur. I would go further, however, and say that there are some things that no sane

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man will ever wish to do so well that people begin to think of him as the professional fly-tier or the world's expert on Slovenian Rizlings. (Plutarch took this attitude to the extreme, arguing that we can enjoy art, though no gentleman would wish to be known as an artist.)

Orvis schools and pretentious tackle shops have ruined fly-fishing for me. I used to listen sympathetically to Ron Mance, a guide on the Brule River, when he waxed eloquent on the subject of "dose guys from da Twins wit dere fancy boron rods and expensive vests from Orvis. Cheeze." They learned in school to cast beautifully and to talk learnedly about reading the stream. Catching fish was something else.

I ran into a classic case when I was fishing the White River in Arkansas. My fishing buddy and I were staying in a nice lodge with excellent food. One night, a rich doctor came in. My friend groaned, having met him years ago in B——. "One of my little brother's friends," he said with the contempt one always has for a little brother's friends. The doctor regaled—not the right word—us with stories of his fishing exploits around the world, most recently in New Zealand. When "Jack," who was the best guide on the White, took my fishing buddy out on the lawn to improve his casting technique, the doctor had to butt in and give unasked advice, which humiliated my friend, who is an excellent fisherman but not a fly-caster. The uninvited advice seriously annoyed the guide. At the bar in the lodge, Jack, who did not suffer fools at all, much less gladly, had a grim look on his face. "Don't worry," he said. "I'm guiding the sonofabitch tomorrow."

The next day about sunset, we were sipping bourbon on the porch when the shaken and demoralized doctor walked in with Jack, who could not wipe the grin off his face. One look said everything. I asked Jack how long it took to administer the much-needed comeuppance. "About the first five minutes on the river." There is justice in the world after all.

I am not saying I would not, under the right circumstances, attend an Orvis school, and I am certainly not going to claim that I have never bragged about my meager fishing exploits. But the time comes when you leave the lodge, go home, and return to the round of work, family, and petty pleasures that make up ordinary life. There are a few good books on fishing worth taking off the shelf and an occasional novel or set of stories. Bill Mills' recent book *Deep Hunting, Shallow Fishing* is, in my view, outstanding and far better than Caroline Gordon's stories, which are also worth reading. But even a devoted fisherman such as Mills has other interests—in his case, literature and history, philosophy and theology. In any event, he does not have to join a club or take lessons to establish his credentials as a fisherman.

So far as I am concerned, a club is a fat stick you use to hit a ball or beat an enemy's head in. A distinguished historian of my acquaintance was approached by one of his students who observed that, since they both drove the same make of automobile, they ought to form a club. "Tell me," said the professor, "do you own a toothbrush?"

"Yes, I do," replied the unsuspecting student.

"Then why don't we form the toothbrush club?"

No one today, it seems, can pursue a hobby, escape a vice, or suffer a tragedy without submitting himself to the ministrations of "professional" experts. Talking to friends and relations who have gone through rehab, it sounds as if these institutions are designed for two purposes: to transfer your addiction from alcohol to AA, and to encourage you to make a career out of substance-abuse counseling. There are clubs for mothers who have lost children to drunk drivers, clubs for parents who have lost children to gun violence. I wonder if Iraqis have clubs for relatives of the victims of "collateral damage." No soccer stadium, unfortunately, could hold the members.

Support groups and hobbyist clubs are only a symptom of a much larger problem. We Americans have become dependent on other people to organize our lives for us. We used to boast of our independence, our rugged individualism. Now we cannot grieve without professional support or drink whiskey without professional instructions, though I was pleased to see that, when the "grievance counselors" (as NPR calls them) descended on a small Texas town that had suffered a mass murder, no one showed up. It makes you wonder how such people ever voted for George W. Bush.

Wouldn't it be fun to go to a new city and get lost in it, without map or guidebook or any burden of expectations?

My generation is bad enough, but the next group down, in their 30's and 40's, are much more hopelessly dependent, while kids in their teens and early 20's are distinctive, according to adolescent psychologist Mel Levine, not so much for their addiction to cellphones and computers as for their complete dependency on institutions. Stuck in daycare before they had learned to speak, they have spent their lives in school: elementary, middle, and high school, of course, but also soccer league, music camp, and tennis lessons.

Just today, I learned of a travel agency that constructs psychological profiles of its clients before choosing a compatible vacation destination. This way, you never have to experience anything unexpected or exotic, anything that might expand your range of prejudices.

There is no such thing, any more, as a simple pleasure or a naif experience. Most of what we experience has been programmed, designed, and digested. I recall a passage in one of Jack Kerouac's later books where he complained that, by the 1960's, you never saw anyone with his hands in his pockets, walking down the street whistling. Everyone was too self-conscious, too busy being cool. A more profound meditation on self-consciousness was offered by Walker Percy in his essay "The Loss of the Creature." How, he asked, could a late-modern man view the Grand Canyon without putting on the blinders of everything he had read, seen, and heard about the number-one tourist attraction in America?

When Percy was writing his essay in the mid-70's, the issue was, as it had been for the existentialists, one of authenticity, a morally and aesthetically sincere approach to life that is spoiled by the expectations imposed not only by experience but by artificial conventions and commercialized conscience. If you read guidebooks and watch a commercial video of Florence, as many people do, before going to see the city, it may be impossible to discern an authentic Florence under all the layers of guidebook clichés and cinematic images complete with soundtrack and (to give you the real flavor of typical Florentine restaurants) scratch-and-sniff patches of burned garlic powder and cheap acidic wine. One may as well send Rick Steves on the honeymoon trip or, better yet, hire him to stand in for the bridegroom.

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Connoisseurship, whether in paintings or cigars, is only another expression of this phenomenon, the displacement of the authentic, the sincere, and the naive by the artificial, the hip, and the professional. Perhaps I am the last man in the world to feel this way, but I find most art critics, including Bernard Berenson, a little creepy. In their effusions over beauty, they remind me of the older men who are just a little lavish in their attentions to your teenage daughter. What does Shaw's Don Juan tell the Devil, after enduring his praise of music and poetry? "You sound like an hysterical woman fawning on a fiddler." Interpretations of art are even worse than effusions. I do not want someone telling me what to think or how to feel. I hate the miscalled literary critics that want to tell you why and how you should read Pound's *Cantos* or Shakespeare's sonnets, and I do not much care which school of criticism they belong to—New Critical, Projectivist, Neo-formal, Deconstructionist. A murrain on them all.

It is not that art historians and even some literary critics have not made valuable contributions to our understanding, *etc., etc., etc.* (just fill in whatever obligatory weaseling you like), but wouldn't it be fun, just once, to go to a new city and get lost in it, without map or guidebook or any burden of expectations? Or walk into a church you have never heard of and admire a painting without being told who painted it? Or pick out a book of poetry from the shelf and read a poem without knowing anything about it? Perhaps this all sounds too Navrozovian.

During World War I, Robert Bridges, the poet laureate, put together an excellent anthology of verse to lift the hearts of the British people. In the first edition of *The Spirit of Man*, he did not include so much as the authors' names, though, in later editions, he put them into an appendix (for which I am grateful). Still, it is a wonderful thing to stumble across a poem you like without knowing in advance whether you should like it. Recently, I read a few fine lines only to discover that they were by, ugh, our own version of a poet laureate, Archibald MacLeish, whom I should never have willingly read. Finding a good poem or story by a writer you despise is like watching Paul Wolfowitz perform a selfless good deed. Such experiences remind us of the power of God.

Most people eventually want to know a little something about what they have seen or read, and, if you are like me, you might spend days, weeks, and months studying the history of Rome in the 19th century. But the object of studying history, languages, and literature is not to cobble together a ready-made patter to repeat to yourself before entering the Sistine Chapel or to wow your friends with such gems as "Look at how the eyes follow you across the room," or "Bernini's statue is holding up his hands in horror to show his contempt for his rival Borromini" or the beauty of *La Gioconda*, "wrought out from within upon the flesh—the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions." That final gem is from Walter Pater, the greatest argument for unlettered barbarism produced in the past two centuries.

For the most part, critical jargon, in both art and literature, consists of clichés and labels whose primary purpose is to reduce the work to the level of the critic's understanding, and, once a painting or poem has been papered over by criticism, we can no longer see it or hear it. Serious study of history or music composition is another matter. In "the immense disorder of truths," our studies (like our reading and listening to music) are really only a more concentrated form of experience, and the gap between knowledge gained from experience and mere connoisseurship is as broad and as deep as the Grand Canyon. ◁▷

On Clearing Land in Gilmanton

by Eric Sellin

After so many years, it is most wise and good
to work this earth again, this ground
which others cleared of tree and stone,
only to have the trees grow back again.

Indeed, we learned that even stones
Are activè and rise up through the earth
and will, as they had once before,
challenge ax and pick and tiller blade.

It is true that we have only cleared
an acre, more or less; but, nonetheless,
as we worked at felling trees and stooped
to pull small stumps missed by the back-hoe

and, dripping with sweat, heard the *thunk* of ax
against rock maple roots and the bell-clear
plink or clang of crowbar against the stones
we then wedged, prised, and hefted up onto the fence,

I did, I swear it, hear a distant sound—
a kind of resonance one feels but once or twice
in one's lifetime—the sound, be it so subtle,
of those who cleared this land and built

the fence that we now would enhance,
and whose presence we feel when we cock an ear
towards time and believe we hear a clink
of crowbar against rock, the ring of axes

from another day, and also hear the sighs
of the standing trees that in their roots
recall the tremors of winter storms,
another age of older trees that swayed,

prevailing against gales before yielding, too,
to the axes and saws that cleared the land.
And overhead, in the stubborn clouds,
we readily imagine murmurs of assent

from times past, from those who felled
the trees and from the trees themselves
with whom we—and they of other times—
drew up this cruel yet loving pact.

Gilmanton, NH

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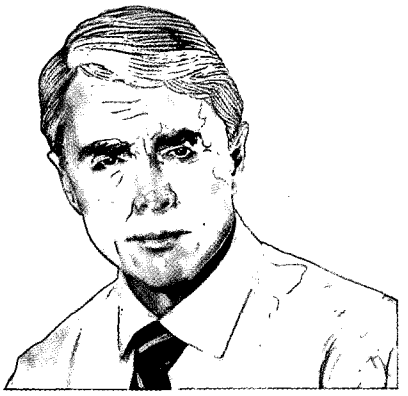
by Roger D. McGrath

White Sprinters



For several years now, professional baseball has been pouring millions of dollars into developing black players. Evidently, the number of black players, at least American blacks, has been in decline. NASCAR is funding programs to develop black drivers after fielding complaints that the sport is too white. Similarly, the NHL now has a "Diversity Program" designed to put more blacks on the ice. I can only imagine the outcry if the 75-percent-black NBA funded development programs for white players. Since I ran the 100 and 220, though, I'm rooting for the "White Sprinter Project."

Unknown to many today, whites dominated the sprints and accounted for nearly all of the world records until the 1960's. During all those years of white-sprinting prowess, blacks were competing also, even winning American championships and gold medals in the Olympics. It was not as if blacks were prohibited from competing. Nearly everyone knows that Jesse Owens captured the 100 and 200 at Berlin in 1936, and Owens was only one of many black sprinters America produced. But America also produced white sprinters. So, too, did the nations of Europe. Whites scorched the tracks of both hemispheres. There was even an Australian, Hec Hogan, who tied the world record in the 100-yard dash in 1954 and put the Southern Hemisphere on the sprinting map. If blacks had once dominated a sport and had since nearly disappeared, every black child in America would be made aware of that fact in school, and there would be a heavily funded national effort to bring blacks back to predominance.

Jeremy Wariner stands out today, not only because he won the 400 meters at the tender age of 19 in the 2004 Olympics, but because he is white. Since then, he has been unbeatable in the 400 and is poised to break the world record. After Wariner destroyed a stellar field in the 400 at a meet in Southern California in May, a black coach said that the sport needed more like him. When questioned further, the coach said, "More white sprinters would really help track."

When I was growing up, I never saw a track meet without fast white sprinters—and California had the finest track meets in the world: The Coliseum Relays, the Modesto Relays, the Compton Relays, and the West Coast Relays were legendary. For nearly a half-century, the world record in the 100-yard dash was owned by Southern Californians: Charley Paddock, Frank Wykoff, and Mel Patton. Paddock ran a 9.5 (seconds) in the early 1920's; Wykoff, a 9.4 in 1930; and Patton, a 9.3 in 1948. Patton's record stood until 1962. Patton and the others ran on dirt tracks and without the aid of anabolic steroids and human growth hormone. I suspect they would have run at least two-tenths faster on the springy, rubberized-asphalt tracks of today.

"Pell-Mel" Patton led the University High Warriors to the Los Angeles city prep-track championship in 1943. After World War II, he attended Southern Cal (or simply SC—nobody called the school USC in those days). As a Trojan, the splendid sprinter—six-feet tall and 150 pounds—was smoking tracks and opponents in dash after dash. He tied Frank Wykoff's record of 9.4 twice in 1947 and won the NCAA championship, then broke the 100 record with a 9.3 in 1948 and won both sprints in the NCAA championship.

In 1948, he was the favorite for the Olympic dashes in London, but on a cold, blustery, wet day, the half-frozen Patton, who appeared to have minus body fat, tied up badly in the 100. The World's Fastest Human finished a shocking fifth. Devastated, he stood in front of his blocks for the 200 final two days later thinking that he would be lucky to place. More than 100,000 Wembley Stadium spectators were silent as the runners took their marks. Suddenly, someone in the crowd yelled, "Go Uni! Uni High Warriors!" Patton felt a rush of adrenaline course through his body like never before. At the report of the starter's pistol, he exploded from the blocks and led from start to finish. He later anchored the U.S. 4x100 relay team to victory.

As a senior at SC in 1949, Patton ran a mind-boggling 9.0—some watches read 8.9—but a tailwind was fractionally above the limit. Most observers, including my older brother, who was then running the sprints as a sophomore at Uni, thought the wind was of only small advantage. Patton later broke the world record in the 220 with a blazing 20.2. He finished his collegiate career by wining both dashes at the NCAA championship and anchoring the SC 4 x 220 relay team to a world record.

White-sprinting dominance continued throughout the 50's. Larry Remigino won the 100 in the 1952 Olympics, and Dave Sime and Bobby Morrow ruled the rest of the decade. After breaking Patton's record in the 220 with a 20.0 and twice tying Patton's 9.3 in the 100, Sime, a Duke sophomore, was expected to star in the 1956 Olympics. An injury put him on the sideline, though, and, at Melbourne, Abilene Christian sophomore Bobby Morrow won both dashes and anchored the U.S. 4x100 relay team to victory and a world record. By the time Morrow finished running, he had won 80 of 88 races, tied world records in both sprints, and anchored two world-record relays.

Recovered from injury, Dave Sime ran a 9.3 again in 1957. He graduated from Duke a year later, leaving behind nine school records—two still stand—and entered medical school. Despite little time for training, he made the Olympic team in 1960 in the 100. At Rome, a terrible start left him dead last, but he closed dramatically and hit the tape in a photo finish with Armin Hary of Germany. Hary got the nod, but both runners broke the Olympic record. With Peter Radford of Britain finishing third, white sprinters had swept the 100 again as they had at Melbourne when American Thane Baker and Aussie Hec Hogan followed Bobby Morrow to the finish line.

World records. Olympic sweeps. The World's Fastest Human. Where is the White Sprinter Project?

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Liberality, the Basis of Culture

The Ultimate Homeschool

by Hugh Barbour, O.Praem.

". . . redeeming the time, because the days are evil."
—Ephesians 5:15

"Go day, come day. Lord, send Sunday." My paternal grandmother could be counted on to say these words at least once per week. Whether burdened with some mundane task or confronted with the evidence of human frailty, the prospect of the day of worship and witness, of rest and reading, of visiting and victuals was a precious consolation to her. Sunday reigned sovereign over the other days of the week, and the breach of its observance, whether by absence from church or by skimping on dinner or by mowing the lawn, was proof not only of infidelity, but of incivility. When local authorities began to permit Sunday openings, she saw through their pretense and predicted dire effects. "They think that they can steal time from the Almighty and that He won't notice. But He's the One who said 'Six days shalt thou labor, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God.' Soon enough and they'll begin to think that they're almighty themselves, but He'll show them who's the King."

My grandmother was surely not a philosopher and even less a theologian. (Her best effort at showing some little appreciation of her grandson's Catholicity was when she said, "The Roman religion is just too deep for me.") Even so, her approach to time and work and worship was in line with the deepest of insights, in particular with those of the great German Thomist Josef Pieper, who, in the summer of 1947, presented a paper in Bonn entitled "*Musse und Kult*" ("Leisure and Worship"), known in English as *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*. The American edition of this conference, with a splendid Introduction by T.S. Eliot—a fine piece in its own right—was first published in 1952. Ever since, it has set the standard for contemporary treatments of the meaning of culture as *cult*—that is, as founded in the celebration of divine worship.

Pieper's study hinges on several telling etymologies from which are to be unpacked all the implications of his theory of the essential form of human society. One is the Greek *schole*, which means "leisure"; from this word is derived the Latin *schola* and, hence, the English *school*, as well as its equivalents in all the Romance and Germanic languages. Regarding the leisure necessary for contemplation, Pieper writes:

> "We work in order to have leisure." . . . That maxim is not . . . an illustration invented for the sake of clarifying this thesis: it is a quotation from Aristotle; and the fact that it expresses the view of a cool-headed workaday realist (as he is supposed to have been) gives it all the more weight. Literally, the Greek says "we are unleisurely in order to have leisure." "To be unleisurely"—that is the word the Greeks used not only for the daily toil and moil of life, but for ordinary everyday work.

"Greek," Pieper points out, "only has a negative"—*a-scholia*—"just as Latin has neg-otium." Another word is *cultus*, to which is related *cultura* and, evidently, *culture* and all its equivalents in other European languages. In his Preface to the American translation, Pieper points out:

> The word "cult" in English is used exclusively, or almost exclusively, in a derivative sense. But here it is used, along with worship, in its primary sense. It means something else than, and something more than, religion. It really means fulfilling the ritual of public sacrifice. That is a notion which contemporary "modern" man associates almost exclusively and unconsciously with uncivilized, primitive peoples and with classical antiquity. For that very reason it is of the first importance to see that the *cultus*, now as in the distant past, is the primary source of man's freedom, independence and immunity within society. Suppress that last sphere of freedom, and freedom itself, and all our liberties, will in the end vanish into thin air.

This characterization of freedom and liberty as the fruits of right worship directs our attention to a third telling etymology, that of the *artes liberales*, the "liberal arts." Pieper clarifies the notion for us with arguments from great authorities, ancient and modern:

> What are the liberal arts? In his commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, Aquinas gives this definition: "Only those are called liberal or free which are concerned with knowledge; those which are concerned with utilitarian ends that are attained through activity, however, are called servile." "I know well," Newman says, "that knowledge may resolve itself into an art, and seminate in a mechanical process and in tangible fruit; but it may also fall back upon that Reason, which informs it, and resolve itself into Philosophy. For in one case it is called Useful Knowledge, in the other Liberal." The liberal arts, then, include all forms of human activity which are an end in themselves; the servile arts are those which have an end beyond themselves, and more precisely an end which consists in a utilitarian result

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attainable in practice, a practicable result.

This third consideration, of the meaning of *liberal*, will shortly lead us to some progress in thought even beyond Pieper's little—*klein aber fein*—masterpiece, but wholly in line with it. First, however, let us sum up his teaching: A true human society, a genuine culture, is based on those activities that are ends in themselves, which do not serve any purpose other than knowledge and love. Among these contemplative activities of free men possessing leisure time, the highest place, the one most formally determining of culture, is common worship, the celebration of the cultus of the Divinity, the sacrifice of praise, surely the most self-sufficient of human and social activities. The preeminent cultural form is, thus, the feast, the holy day, the Sabbath, the Lord's Day, which, because of the Christian dispensation, in fact becomes every day, since on every day this worship is offered. Pieper sums up his high point:

> The Christian *cultus*, unlike any other, is at once a sacrifice and a sacrament. Insofar as the Christian *cultus* is a *sacrifice* held in the midst of creation which is affirmed by the sacrifice of the God-man—every day is a feast day; and in fact the liturgy knows only feast days, even working days being *feria* . . . We hope . . . that in the performance of [Christian worship] man, "who is born to work" may be truly "transported" out of the weariness of daily labor into an unending holiday, carried away out of the straitness of the workaday world into the heart of the universe.

The grandeur of Pieper's vision of human existence in society can hardly be overstated. He has pointed out the key to the sublimation of all our activities—not only of the necessarily servile arts that serve the others but of the sciences and philosophy—into an act of worship, which contains the praise of the whole creation under God. Even so, his vision can be transcended, for there is a more fundamental sense of the "liberal" of the utterly free and at ease, which underlies the whole, and goes beyond mere culture and even creaturely worship, by reaching the Source of all things whatsoever and indicating the attribute most characteristic, most proper to Him. In discussing whether God can be said to have the moral virtues that issue forth in action, St. Thomas Aquinas tells us in his *Summa contra Gentiles* I:xciii:

> The ultimate end for which God wills all things in no way depends on the things that exist for the sake of that end, either in regard to being or to some particular perfection. Hence, He does not will to give someone His goodness so that thereby something may accrue to Himself, but because for Him to make such a gift befits Him as the fount of goodness. But to give something not for the sake of some benefit expected from the giving, but because of the goodness and appropriateness of the giving, is an act of liberality, as appears from the Philosopher in Ethics iv. God, therefore, is supremely liberal, and as Avicenna says, He alone can be properly called liberal, for every agent other than God acquires some good from his action, which is the intended end. Scripture sets forth the liberality of God, saying in a psalm "When thou openest thy hand, they shall all be filled with good" and in James "Who giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not."

"God alone is supremely liberal . . . He alone can be properly, proprie, called liberal." Quite simply, it is impossible for a creature to perform any good action, even the most lofty, without some kind of product—namely, the hitherto unattained end intended and gained by his action. Even if it is an end in itself, the action of one who—unlike God—is not identical with his own good brings about his own perfection and happiness, not to mention the merit that claims a reward in justice. But God acts without the least increase in His own perfection or happiness, gaining nothing, solely out of goodness, and so He alone is truly and properly, fully and perfectly free, liberal.

We ourselves must give others the time, the liberty, and the sacred precinct to possess with us "the power to become the sons of God." This is the needful liberality that must be the basis of culture. And all the more because it will only come about in those places where we ourselves undertake so great a work on so small a scale. The great workaday world is not going to do it for us. It will be for a time the ultimate "home-*schole*"—and not only for children, but for our neighbors and friends; and not only for worship, but for everything human. Grandmother's house on Sunday may be the very* statio orbis *for which we are looking.

Aristotle already had a shadowy hint of an understanding of the ultimate sense of the service God's intelligent creatures owe Him when, in the crowning considerations of his *Metaphysics*, he explains that the powers of heaven are drawn by the contemplation of the Supreme Good and Ultimate Final Cause of all things to the imitation of His causality, each having its own proper effect on the beings lower in the hierarchy of the cosmos. Aquinas, commenting on this passage, describes the purpose of their activity as one of assimilation, of becoming like the Good, by imitating His self-diffusive generosity *ut assimilentur ei in causando*. They become like Him by doing

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Melanie Anderson

as He does, pouring out their inner riches of mind and will on those beneath them. In the Christian era, this office has not been left merely (what a bold "merely" that is!) to the angels, but has been extended through the Incarnation of God to men. They become "sharers in the divine nature" and form a nation of priests, prophets, and kings. Becoming images and likenesses of the divine liberality, the free and easy beneficence of God, then, is the end of those who contemplate in leisure the higher things and who, in worship, not only praise as creatures but pour out as priests the "good things to come." There is a kind of paradox here, which, upon examination, is only a recapitulation on a higher level: The final perfection of contemplative leisure is an action, a work of generous liberality. Saint Paul reminds us of the words of Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Here is his meaning.

"It is better to give light than merely to burn." This is Aquinas' tag to introduce his rationale for the life of the apostle being higher in dignity than that of the mere contemplative, since the apostle not only gazes lovingly at the Good but bestows it on others. This is not the banal activism of the bored humanitarian; it is the intense, contemplative drive of one who has become like the One Whom he has contemplated in worship. As our Western world becomes more and more clearly the place of the sunset of all that is leisurely, free, and pious, it is this effect of the Christian cultus that must stand out more clearly: the love of neighbor as the visible sign of the love of God. We ourselves must give others the time, the liberty, and the sacred precinct to possess with us "the power to become the sons of God." This is the needful liberality that must be the basis of culture. And all the more because it will only come about in those places where we ourselves undertake so great a work on so small a scale. The great workaday world is not going to do it for us. It will be for a time (please excuse the macaronic pun) the ultimate "home-*schole*"—and not only for children, but for our neighbors and friends; and not only for worship, but for everything human. Grandmother's house on Sunday may be the very *statio orbis* for which we are looking.

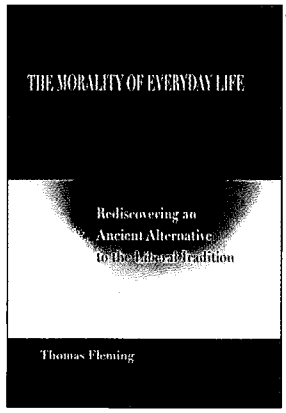
There is a final caveat. Having contemplated the Good, and now returning to enlighten our fellow men, we may share the fate of the one who returned to the darkness of the Platonic cave to free those who know only shadows and who confuse words with realities. But then, did He not say, "and if I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all men unto Myself"? And is this not why our Sunday is a feast? ◁▷

The Morality of Everyday Life:
Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition

by Thomas Fleming

What passes for conservatism today is really nothing more than the impossible moral and social theories of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which universal abstractions, such as democracy and equality, are presented as hard truths, when, in fact, they have never existed in any society in human history. Nonetheless, they are to be applied worldwide, at the tip of a spear (or cruise missile) if necessary.

Dr. Fleming's alternative is rooted in "everyday life," the local realities of blood and soil, custom and tradition, friendship and faith, and in the wisdom born of the experiences these realities beget. This wisdom finds expression in folktales and fables, in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, and in medieval casuistry. It is the method to solving ethical problems great and small, and it is the method that undergirds authentic conservatism.



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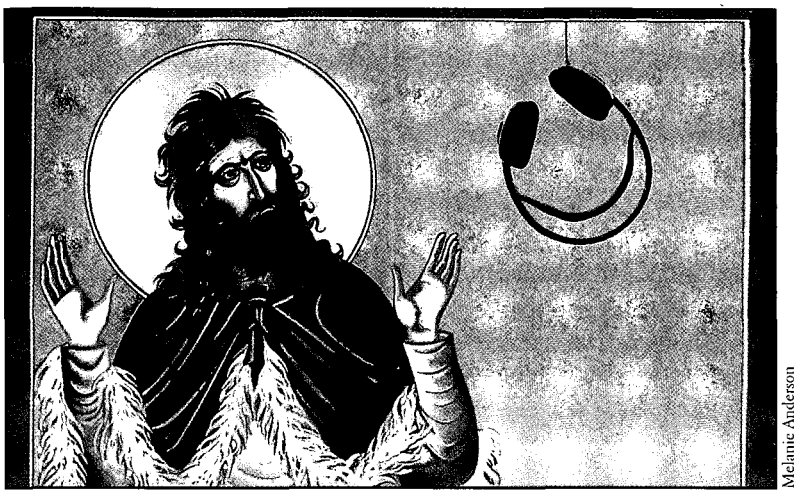
Wall of Sound

Noise as the Basis of Culture

by Aaron D. Wolf

"And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp."

—Exodus 32:17



Melanie Anderson

Poor Phil Spector. He may be a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the producer of a string of hits from "Be My Baby" (The Ronettes) to "The Long and Winding Road" (The Beatles). But now, thanks to Court TV, it looks as if he will be remembered chiefly for owning the "castle" in which B-movie actress Lana Clarkson was found dead, with a bullet in her head. (That he had made a habit of making death threats, and that, around the time of the killing, he had told the *Telegraph* that he is "relatively insane," and that, immediately after the killing, he reportedly told police, "I think I killed somebody" may not have helped his case.)

Before his arrest and trial, Spector was most famous for his production technique, the "Wall of Sound." To achieve it, he piled layer upon layer of superfluous sound onto each recording, ornamenting lead vocals with near constant background vocals, choirs *ooh*ing and *ahh*ing, strings, horns, two basses, several guitars, and a host of echo and doubling effects. His treatment of "Long and Winding Road" provided The Beatles with their last number-one single, but it so angered Paul McCartney, who had written—and, so far as he knew, recorded—a simple piano ballad, that Sir Paul cited it as one of his non-Yoko reasons for the band's breakup.

Spector considers himself another Wagner, but he was more of a musical Hitler. For him, the Wall of Sound was about control. By eliminating any hint of silence in a recording, he forced the listener to be completely passive, free from that moment of anticipation that permits the mind to fill in the next blank. To listen to a Spector production is to be "immersed" in Phil. Of this sonic self-projection, one of his colleagues said, in an interview, "if you listen to [Spector's] records in sequence, the lead goes further and further in[,] and to me what he is saying is, 'It is not the song . . . just listen to those strings. I want more musicians; it's me."

Spector's influence on American pop music has been significant. Brian Wilson was inspired by him (and by the coke that controlled his brain), and you can hear the Wall of Sound on *Pet Sounds*, the Beach Boys' groundbreaking album. It's there on countless other non-Spector-produced records as well, from ABBA's "Dancing Queen" to Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run." And even though funk, reggae, and the "unplugged" movement were something of a reaction against the Wall of Sound, today's pop music is haunted by Phil Spector.

On a broader level, we live in Spector's Wall of Sound. Not a single second of our lives is meant for silence. We have our iPods, cellphones, TVs, web browsers, and radios. And everyone else has his, too. The car in the next lane has its subwoofer, as does the kid down the street. Outside the window at work, the sound of RPMs rising and falling continues throughout the day. Inside the office, the hard drive spins and the cooling fan whirs, the landline rings and the copier turns. The mouse clicks, the keys click, and we click through the pages on the web browser, filled with embedded commercials, songs, audio clips from films. Then these sounds follow us home. And even at night, when the sound of passing engines and mufflers is less

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frequent, we can hear the click of the thermostat, the furnace lighting, the fan springing to life. Our Wall of Sound culture delivers noise at such a decibel level that, even in our few quiet moments, the reverberations of songs ("I can't get that tune out of my head") fill our quiet moments. Yet we crave sound so much that we purchase noise machines to help us sleep.

***Silence shatters the illusion of independence, breaking down our Wall of Sound that protects us from Reality. When our souls are still, we can no longer drown out the voice of conscience or, more importantly, of the* Logos.**

At the store, we hear Muzak, interrupted by the latest Blue Light Special, a celebrity reading copy for an as-seen-on-TV sale, a manager calling for more cashiers up front. At the ballpark, each inning has a musical segue—either bass-pounding hip-hop or heavy-metal guitar licks. At church, the liturgist or cantor or priest or pastor is armed with a lapel mic, which is necessary, since not everyone pays attention during announcements or sees the admonition in the bulletin:

> Good morning! The deacons at PCPC would like to remind you that there is a cry-room for all mothers of small children. This room is equipped with a changing table and a speaker, so you can hear the service. Also, out of respect for our visitors, please turn off your cellphone or put it on "vibrate."

A great deal of church music is designed to echo the Wall of Sound. In some places, this takes the form of a "praise band," complete with drums, guitars, keyboards, and one each of the SATB singers—all of which (or whom) require amplification. (Even drums have to be flanked by screens or "shields" to keep the kick and the snare from interfering with everyone else's mic and monitor, which means that, of course, the drums must have their own mics. This also helps with the mix for the radio broadcast.) While the ATB leads the congregation in a chorus, the S caterwauls, Mariah-style, over the ends of the measures.

Even for those of us in traditional churches, there is little space for quietness in our worship. We like a tight service that proceeds at a certain pace, with no excessive lingering during segues. We prefer the full orchestra. We want a lively sermon that keeps our attention, not a dogmatic exposition that requires us to *pay* attention. And, if nothing else, the organist should play something.

What we do not want is silence. Silence is awkward—makes for awkward pauses. And we are comfortable enough with our Wall of Sound that we assume this has no effect on our ability to hear.

"Leisure is a form of silence," wrote Josef Pieper, "of that silence which is the prerequisite of the apprehension of reality . . . " Today, we think of leisure as the time we spend away from work seeking sensate pleasure, *escaping* reality. (A Google image search for "leisure" yields lots of pictures of people on beaches, or on jet skis, or at resorts, or wearing a certain type of suit while worshiping the Golden Calf at Studio 54.) But neither that fantasy nor the plainness of everyday life is the reality of which Pieper speaks—namely, the reality created and sustained by the living Word of God, which is often contrary to sight. To listen—and, thus, to "apprehend reality"—we have to close our eyes and our mouths. Thus, true leisure, in a Christian sense, is "the time in which only the silent hear and those who do not remain silent do not hear."

The mere absence of sound is not enough.

> Silence, as it is used in this context, does not mean "dumbness" or "noiselessness"; it means more nearly that the soul's power to "answer" to the reality of the world is left undisturbed. For leisure is a receptive attitude of mind, a contemplative attitude, and it is not only the occasion but the capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation.

Thus, the goal of silence is not merely to eliminate noise: It is to hear the voice of God. And in order to hear, we have to have "ears to hear." After slaughtering the prophets of Baal by calling down fire from Heaven, the prophet Elijah fled from Ahab and Jezebel. Gripped by fear, he tried to find God in noise and chaos:

> And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:
>
> And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

God was not in the spectacle, nor was He in the noise: His voice was heard in the stillness.

The culture of Christendom was a culture of leisure, because Christianity is a religion first of sound, and then of sight—of word before image. This is no iconoclasm: It is only to say that, in the economy of grace, the image serves the word. For all of their splendor and majesty, the great cathedrals of the West are designed chiefly to evoke silence and, thus, focus the attention of the hearer on the Gospel. (Visit Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, then compare the noise level with that of a megachurch, or even a church-in-the-round.) Silence is at the heart of Christian worship, for "faith cometh by hearing," and "blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it," and "blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe." In his commentary on Saint Luke's Gospel, Saint Ambrose writes that "Sight is often deceived; hearing serves as guarantee." In this fallen world, what we see—the shadows of the world spoken into existence by the *Logos*—is often deceiving. Can this bread that we bless really be the Body of Christ? Is this Church, so rocked by scandal, really His spotless Bride? Is this crucified Man "truly the son of God"? The "King of the Jews"? Well, "he *said* . . . "

Yes, *He said*. But are we listening? Or are we conforming reality to what we see, or think we see, or want to see?

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Oral traditions are bound by place, an incarnational quality that demands a certain level of silence. ("Hush, I can't hear.") Our media culture, flanked on all sides by the Wall of Sound, is only bound by the limits of its own technology and the perversity of those who use it. And our noisy technology has gone to great lengths to eliminate the natural barriers of place from every aspect of life. It allows Western man to be the naked individual, alone in his chamber with his television, his eyes trained on the screen, his ears listening to something (Geraldo Rivera, Bill O'Reilly) other than the still small voice.

The naked individual lives in a fantasy world in which he is free from all outside influence. Our noisy machines make us independent of others by doing their work. And we assert our own individuality, our "creativity," through our little blogs and by consuming the noisome individuality of others:

RIVERA: It's not an illegal alien story, Bill. It's a drunk driving story.

(CROSSTALK)

O'REILLY: Here's why you're wrong.

RIVERA: And I think you owe that poor lady mayor an apology.

(CROSSTALK)

O'REILLY: No. No.

RIVERA: She doesn't enforce immigration policy.

O'REILLY: She has set up a system in her city knowingly . . .

RIVERA: No, she hasn't, Bill.

(CROSSTALK)

Of course, asserting one's independence today means wearing the same jeans that Paris Hilton and (thus) a million others are wearing, speaking the same ebonics ("Dog, that Fred Thompson is *dope*!") as every other white middle-class gangsta wannabe, and believing the same lies ("We can all at least agree that it's good that the Iraqis are now able to have democratic elections") as everyone else in the empire.

Yet that independence remains a mere illusion. For with the loss of "oral culture" (please refrain from googling *that*) came the loss of memory, of place, of identity. We exchanged mediators for media. We must now trust people whom we will never see, whose real voices we will never hear, to tell us what's important; they discern for us the signs of the times. They fill our ears with words, which only adds to the noise.

Silence shatters the illusion of independence, breaking down our Wall of Sound that protects us from Reality. When our souls are still, we can no longer drown out the voice of conscience or, more importantly, of the *Logos*. Yes, grace is required for us to answer the call of God; but we have to turn down the TV to hear the telephone ringing.

I do wonder, though: If our culture is surrounded by a Wall of Sound, who is our Phil Spector? Who are we taking our cues from? Surely, it must be someone who is desperate for us not to hear, or believe, the voice of God. Someone who wishes to immerse us in himself. Someone who wants us to be altogether passive, easier to control. Someone who would say, "It's not about the Song, it's about me." That sounds like the one who said in the beginning, "Did God really say?" and "You will not surely die" and "Your eyes will be opened" and "I think I killed somebody." <©>

The Old Workbench

by Eric Sellin

Tonight, standing before the seared and cluttered bench,
amidst my burnished tools so lovingly acquired,
I grow afraid of implications age-inspired;
but then I look around me and grasp a handy wrench

whose gap and well-knurled nut seem just so right,
a tool made generations past, a perfect thing
to hold, an implement whose just-so tooling quite
illumines this dim and present space and makes it ring,

and sing the praise of labor, evoking another day
when life was truly better, or at least did seem less frantic;
and yet it does occur to me that this may,
perhaps, just be a case of an elderly romantic

pausing to heft an object that in its subtle way
keeps the Grim Reaper's nicked and rusty scythe at bay.

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Social Security's War on Families

A Current Crisis and a Coming Disaster

by Doug Bandow

The war in Iraq has left many casualties; Social Security reform is one of them. For so long, Democrats surrounded the issue with demagoguery. And now that the Democrats control Capitol Hill, Republicans seem unwilling to acknowledge, let alone confront, Social Security's impending financial collapse.

And yet the need to confront the problem has never been greater. The coming retirement of roughly 78 million baby boomers threatens to wreck the U.S. Treasury and, perhaps, the economy. Social Security spent $461 billion last year, which made it the largest domestic outlay and a rival of the military budget for biggest federal expense overall. Despite the efforts of the would-be empire builders, who would like to devote the entire U.S. economy to the military, outlays for Social Security will eventually exceed defense spending. (At $406 billion last year, Medicare is gaining even faster and will soon outpace both the military and Social Security.) And Social Security is weakening more than the U.S. economy; it also undermines personal and family responsibility, encouraging early retirement and shifting the duty to care for the elderly to the government.

Social Security is built upon a lie. The system purports to maintain a trust fund, with "assets" of two trillion dollars in net present-value terms, which is supposed to cover benefits from 2017, when program outgo starts exceeding inflow, to 2041. This fund, however, is an accounting fiction. It contains no money; rather, it consists of a pile of federal paper IOUs that have no market value, in a file cabinet in a government office in West Virginia. Paying for benefits will require either tax hikes or spending cuts—the same as if there were no "trust fund."

The U.S. population is aging: Life expectancy is up; fertility rates are down. The number of elderly is growing, and the elderly are living longer. As a result, Social Security operates like a large-scale Ponzi scheme rather than an insurance system. One estimate (from the 2007 Trustees Report) concludes that, over the next 75 years, the program faces an unfunded liability of $6.8 trillion (in net present-value terms). Other estimates, which are highly sensitive to economic projections, run to nine trillion dollars or more.

Combine Social Security with Medicare, and you get a financial tsunami. Jagadeesh Gokhale, now at the Cato Institute, and Kent Smetters, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, propose a measure of Fiscal Imbalance (FI) with an infinite time horizon. Their 2003 FI estimate for Social Security was seven trillion dollars; today, that number would be higher. (Medicare was even worse, with an FI of $36.6 trillion. The rest of the federal government ran just $0.5 trillion.)

Unfortunately, the FI worsens over time. At $44.2 trillion in 2003, the combined FI is set to grow "by about $1.6 trillion per year to about $54 trillion by just 2008 unless corrective policies are implemented before then," explain Gokhale and Smetters. Long-term estimates obviously are sensitive to economic assumptions: The FI could be "only" $29 trillion if we are lucky, or $64 trillion if we are not. And these estimates do not include the cost of the new drug benefit, which had not been passed when Gokhale and Smetters completed their analysis. That program adds somewhere in the neighborhood of $18 trillion to Uncle Sam's unfunded liabilities.

To put this into perspective, the federal government spends less than $3 trillion per year; the entire public debt is $4.6 trillion; America's annual GDP is about $12 trillion; and Americans' total personal financial net worth is about $35 trillion. Comptroller General David M. Walker has warned: "The only thing the United States is able to do a little after 2040 is pay interest on massive and growing federal debt. The model blows up in the mid-2040s. What does that mean? Argentina."

Having created an enormous unfunded liability, the Social Security system exacerbates the financial burden by discouraging private savings, an important factor in spurring economic growth. By soaking up money ($642 billion in taxes collected last year), the federal government diverts income that otherwise could be invested in economically productive private activities; and, by promising retirement benefits, Social Security also makes private saving seem less necessary. The program's net impact is to diminish investment, economic productivity, and overall growth. It will be difficult enough to come up with as much as $80 trillion to pay future benefits without inadvertently slowing the economy.

The burgeoning fiscal crisis is reason enough for reform, but, no matter how you slice it, the necessary reforms will be unpleasant. The only way to reduce costs is to cut benefits; and the only way to preserve benefits is to raise taxes. Beneficiaries already receive an awful rate of return on their "investment." A combination of higher taxes and lower benefits would make the program an even worse deal.

Economist Martin Feldstein compares the average growth of real wages since 1960, which he considers to be a good proxy for Social Security's rate of return, to the real pretax return on nonfinancial corporate capital (essentially, profits plus net interest paid). The difference is alarming:

> Consider an employee who contributes $1,000 to Social Security at age 50 to buy benefits to be paid at age 75. With a 2.6 percent yield, the $1,000 grows to $1,900 af-

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Doug Bandow, a former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan, is vice president for policy of Citizen Outreach and the author of Leviathan Unchained: Washington's Bipartisan Big Government Consensus *(forthcoming from Xulon Press).*

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ter the 25 years. In contrast, a yield of 9.3 percent would allow the individual to buy the same $1,900 retirement income for only $206. Thus, forcing individuals to use the unfunded system dramatically increases their cost of buying retirement income. In the example, a funded plan would permit the individual to buy the same retirement income with a 2.5 percent contribution instead of the 12 percent payroll tax. The 9.5 percent difference is a pure real tax for which the individual gets nothing in return.

Attempting to choose between benefit reductions and tax hikes is likely to trigger an ugly generational battle. Certainly, no young person should count on Social Security for his retirement.

The problem with Social Security is not merely fiscal, but cultural and social. Though Social Security is presented as helping lower-income people and the disadvantaged, the system works against the interests of women and minorities. The rules, developed for two-parent, single-earner households, penalize an ever-larger share of the population: single workers, dual-earner couples, and early divorcées. Groups with shorter life expectancies, such as African-Americans, receive less back in benefits. Although poor people receive a boost—the benefit calculation is modestly progressive—they also tend to die sooner than their wealthier neighbors, so they collect less overall.

Social Security encourages earlier retirement. A study by the National Center for Policy Analysis noted that the percentage of men over 65 who work has dropped by half, to about 20 percent, despite the fact that Americans are living longer. (Roughly, the percentage of women working has stayed constant.) Work participation fell as a larger percentage of men were covered by Social Security and as benefits rose to a larger share of their previous incomes.

Social Security also reduces the incentive to save for one's retirement. For instance, though Social Security recipients have long been told that they should not rely on the program as their sole source of retirement income—the system provides only 42.4 percent of the preretirement income of average workers—today, Social Security benefits account for more than 90 percent of retiree incomes for one quarter of America's elderly. Social Security provides more than half of the income of at least half of today's retirees.

The impact, though it is difficult to measure, is significant. Writes Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute:

> For example, Martin Feldstein of Harvard University and Anthony Pellechio of the National Bureau for Economic Research have found that households reduce their private savings by nearly one dollar for every dollar of the present value of expected future Social Security benefits. Other studies have put the amount of substitution somewhat lower but still indicate a substantial offset. Even two researchers for the Social Security Administration, Dean Leimer and David Richardson, have conceded that "a dollar of Social Security wealth substitutes for about three-fifths of a dollar of fungible assets."

Feldstein reviews the issue from another direction. For an average retiree today, Social Security "benefits replace more than 80 percent of peak preretirement after-tax income. Common sense and casual observation suggest that individuals who can expect such a high replacement rate will do little saving for their retirement." He found median financial assets per household do not provide more than six months of income. Assuming a one-to-one replacement of Social Security benefits for private wealth, Feldstein calculates that "the annual loss of real income would be 6.7 percent of the $9 trillion of Social Security wealth—an amount equal to $600 billion or 8 percent of total GDP." The actual lost savings almost certainly is less, but even a 50-percent replacement would yield a substantial economic hit.

Obviously, people can retire whenever they wish. However, it makes no sense for the government to encourage them to do so earlier than otherwise, especially when the system is financially unsound. By quitting work sooner, they will be less able to save for their own retirements and will more quickly be dependent on public pension benefits. Both factors increase the public's burden and decrease the beneficiary's independence.

Melanie Anderson

Social Security directly discourages employment in other ways. First, payroll taxes act as a direct levy on employment, discouraging job creation. All taxes affect behavior. However, payroll levies have a particularly pernicious economic impact, since they simultaneously raise the cost of an employee to his employer and reduce the benefits received by the employee in compensation for his work.

Feldstein describes the "distorting effect of this tax." For a typical family, he figures that Social Security "raises the total marginal tax rate to more than 40 percent and substantially exacerbates the distortions and waste caused by the income tax." Companies will hire fewer workers and, as a result, people will work less.

But there is more. In a recent study for the Cato Institute, Feldstein points out that

> The combination of the income tax and the payroll tax distorts not only the number of hours that individuals work but also other dimensions of labor supply like occupational choice, location, and effort. It also distorts the form in which compensation is taken, shifting taxable cash into untaxed fringe benefits, nicer working conditions, etc.

The employment effect creates a particularly perverse incentive for a government pension system funded through em-

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ployment. Penalizing workers means that people will work and save less, and seek pension benefits sooner. Thus, there will be fewer workers to support current retirees. Since the principal reason Social Security is rapidly approaching collapse is the dramatic reduction in the ratio between workers and retirees—soon, there will be just two workers for every beneficiary—reducing that ratio even more by pushing more people out of the workforce makes no sense.

Social Security shifts the responsibility for caring for the elderly from individuals and families to the state, and, in most people's minds, turns government into the principal agent to guarantee one's retirement security. Recipients consider their benefits to be "earned," a genuine investment or form of insurance. In fact, the Supreme Court has declared that people have no legal right to their benefits; moreover, today's retirees have received far more than they have paid in.

Social Security is in desperate need of reform, and, given the disaster that looms ahead, we cannot settle for temporary palliatives. Middling tax hikes and benefit cuts would reduce the government's net financial obligations—but only by placing more of a burden on today's workers.

The program has also changed attitudes among adult children and other family members. Since retirees are eligible for Social Security, they seem less needing, and deserving, of family support. In fact, through payroll taxes, young workers are already helping to finance their retired elders. And many of them are aware of the fact that the rising Social Security tax burden makes it harder for them to put money aside for themselves.

Indeed, Social Security, by dramatically lowering the rate of return on this form of "forced savings," makes two generations more dependent on government. Tanner notes that

> Social Security's rate of return has been steadily declining since the program's inception and is now far lower than the return on private capital investment. According to the Social Security Administration, workers born after 1973 will receive rates of return ranging from 3.7 percent for a low-wage, single-income couple to just 0.4 percent for a high-wage-earning single male.

Some studies have found that, for those born in this century, the average rate of return is falling to one percent—and below zero for some workers. They are actually losing money.

From 1926 to today, the average annual rate of return of the U.S. stock market is 7.7 percent. That includes the Great Depression, multiple recessions, and wars. Tanner points out that the average annual real return on corporate bonds (a much safer investment) is over four percent.

The numbers are astounding. According to Tanner,

> A single-earner couple, whose wage earner is 30 years old in 2000 and earning $24,000 per year, can expect to pay more than $134,000 in Social Security taxes over their lifetimes and receive $292,320 in lifetime Social Security benefits (including spousal benefits), assuming that both husband and wife live to normally expected ages. However, had they been able to invest privately, they would have received $875,280. That means the current Social Security system is depriving them of more than half a million dollars.

Transferring responsibility for the care of the elderly has had significant, deleterious social consequences. Caring for different generations within a family can be difficult. Yet the care of one's parents and relatives is a moral necessity, no matter how unpleasant. Social Security allows adult children to pretend that government has magically eliminated the financial pressures and psychological challenges of dealing with aging relatives.

Intergenerational ties bind communities together. Social Security weakens these links and makes it hard for a family to offer better care for its more vulnerable members. Across the generations, the family may provide imperfect care, but it offers a mix of love and knowledge that is, by definition, lacking in any public program. And it discourages the extra effort that characterizes family relationships.

Thomas Jefferson argued that "Dependence begets subservience and venality." Tanner puts it just as provocatively: "In essence, it reduces American seniors to supplicants, robbing them of their dignity and control over their own lives."

Social Security is in desperate need of reform, and, given the damage that is being done already and the disaster that looms ahead, we cannot settle for temporary palliatives. Middling tax hikes and benefit cuts would reduce the government's net financial obligations—but only by placing more of a burden on today's workers. Such a solution does nothing to counteract the program's dependency-inducing characteristics.

The best approach would be to establish some form of private accounts, turning both the resources and the responsibility for retirement over to retirees themselves. As Tanner puts it, "Instead of saving Social Security, we should begin the transition to a new and better retirement system based on individually owned, privately invested accounts."

The economic benefits would be huge. "Conservative assumptions," Martin Feldstein writes,

> imply that Social Security privatization would increase the economic well-being of future generations by an amount equal to 5 percent of GDP each year as long as the system lasts. Although the transition to a funded system would involve economic as well as political costs, the net present value of the gain would be enormous—as much as $10-20 trillion.

Such a gain would dramatically enhance the ability of families to care for one another—a moral benefit that outweighs even the considerable economic benefits of throwing off the shackles of government.

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A Humble Love

by Derek Turner

"Not only England, but every Englishman is an island."
—Friedrich von Hardenberg

Betjeman: A Life
by A.N. Wilson
London: Hutchinson Press;
375 pp., $27.00

◆

John Betjeman's evocative and educative television programs and his uniquely readable poetry have left an indelible image in the British public mind—of a jolly, witty, and eccentric man, ambling around Britain's cities and countryside, pointing out hitherto unnoticed details of hitherto underappreciated buildings and excoriating the dreadful devastation caused by town planners for whom anything old was axiomatically inferior. Betjeman's frequent media appearances, with his trademark crumpled mac, battered hat, and plastic bag; his confessional interviews and articles; his patent kindliness; and his ability to laugh at himself left many Britons with the impression that they knew Betjeman personally. He was a kind of national favorite uncle (albeit one with teeth infamously "covered in green slime" and a "pong" caused by his dislike of bathing).

The publication of Andrew Norman Wilson's long-anticipated biography of this popular figure was overshadowed by the revelation that rival biographer Bevis Hillier had hoaxed Wilson into including a love-letter purportedly written by Betjeman. The letter was cleverly written—but, taken together, the capital letters at the beginning of each of the sentences spelled out "A N Wilson is a shit," and it was forwarded by "Eve de Harben," an anagram for "Ever been had." Hillier resented Wilson for calling the second volume of Hillier's three-volume, 25-years-in-the-making Betjeman biography a "hopeless mish-mash"—and because Wilson's biography had received prepublication publicity as "the big one." Wilson has apparently retaliated in his own hastily produced second edition, but that covert message has yet to be revealed.

Melanie Anderson

Wilson has previously written books about Jesus, Saint Paul, Belloc, C.S. Lewis, Milton, Tolstoy, Scott, the Victorians, London, and the House of Windsor, as well as some 19 novels. He also writes regular columns for newspapers. His biography of Iris Murdoch (2003) drew critical venom, with reviewers calling it, variously, "the aborted foetus of the biography he was contracted to write, pickled in a disturbing mixture of regret, nostalgia and distaste"; "a nasty, hasty piece of work, pockmarked with gratuitous insults, unprovable anecdotes and cruel asides"; and "misguided, treacherous and inessential." One critic noted, "[Wilson] seems to thrive on . . . negative energy: the radioactive fission of feud and betrayal." Mercifully, he is also capable of making deft character judgments, and of viewing Betjeman in his true colors and context.

Betjeman was born into a middle-class family in north London. His father was the proprietor of a third-generation, high-end furniture-making business founded by Anglo-German forebears in the 18th century. They were never close, although Betjeman recorded that his father had read Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* to him as a boy, with considerable formative effect. Betjeman's refusal to follow his father into the family firm ("Uninteresting then it seemed to me, / Uninteresting still") was a source of friction and of lifelong guilt for Betjeman. In his 1960 blank-verse autobiography *Summoned by Bells*, he was still dwelling on his father's reaction:

> I see his kind grey eyes look
> woundedly at mine,
> I see his workmen getting other
> jobs,
> And that red granite obelisk that
> marks
> The family grave in Highgate
> Cemetery
> Points an accusing finger to the sky.

His childhood was characterized by acute consciousness of his middle-class (and, to a lesser extent, partly non-English)

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origins, at a time when class gradations were infinitely more important in English life than they are today. He was often lonely and gloomy, and had a precocious interest in religion, poetry, and the past. His blue moods were leavened by larky humor and intermingled with numinous outbursts inspired by finding congenial souls, uncovering rural survivals in suburban London, exploring old churches, and holidaying in his beloved Cornwall.

He attended Marlborough, which he tended to dislike, then went up to Oxford in 1925, where his tutors included C.S. Lewis, whom he also disliked at the time. Like many a predecessor, he found socializing more enjoyable than study and was eventually sent down for failing in Divinity—an ironical failure for a man who spent so much of his free time in churches. He subsequently became a teacher in a small private school near London—somewhat fraudulently, as the job required proficiency in cricket. (Betjeman was always unfit, although he famously admired sporty girls with "strong legs.")

A life-changing break came in 1930, when Betjeman was recruited to write for *Architectural Review*. An early interest in the theories of Le Corbusier soon changed into a devotion to older buildings, especially Victorian ones. Even in the 30's, thousands of these buildings were being lost every year without anyone really noticing, let alone caring. He hated to see vast new buildings for a newly mobile, "mass man" age—department stores, bus stations, petrol stations, government buildings, factories, "Tudorbethan" flats and houses—being built where, within his memory, there had been old buildings or open fields.

He rapidly made a name for himself as a campaigning journalist and as an authority on the threatened highways and byways of English landscapes and townscapes. Although not all of his campaigns succeeded, he was instrumental in the rescue of such architectural legacies as the Arts and Crafts suburb of Bedford Park in west London and the St. Pancras Hotel at King's Cross. By 1933, he had become general editor of the new *Shell Guides*, with which he was associated until 1966. Issued by the oil company as a marketing tool, these much-admired topographical works encouraged mass motoring, which, Wilson points out acidly, had the ironical effect of helping to ruin the very places they featured.

That same year, he married a field marshal's daughter, Penelope Chetwode, whose mother commented acerbically, "We invite such people to our houses, but we don't marry them." Penelope and Betjeman had a son, Paul, and a daughter, Candida, but he was far from being a perfect paterfamilias. Betjeman's offhand treatment of his son curiously mirrored Ernest Betjeman's treatment of him—and Paul's later conversion to Mormonism was also a curious reprise of John's search for religion in a coldly material world.

He spent 1939-41 working for the Ministry of Information, and 1941-43 as the British press attaché in Dublin. There is a story that the IRA had planned to kill him but that the assassin charged with the task had decided against doing so because, having read some of Betjeman's poetry, he decided he "couldn't be much of a spy."

After spending 1943-45 at the Admiralty, he and Penelope moved to an 18th-century rectory in Berkshire, where one of their first actions was to remove a bathroom because it was out of keeping. Betjeman's refusal to tolerate aesthetically displeasing "mod cons" ensured that the house was uncomfortable all year round. It was for such reasons that his friend Anthony Powell described Betjeman as having a "whim of iron."

Betjeman worked for the British Council after the war, before getting involved with the BBC. He was a "telly" natural, and TV work soon became a kind of compulsion. He even went as far as Australia to make films, although he didn't much like traveling. ("Abroad is so nasty. I would rather die in Wolverhampton than Aix-la-Chapelle.") In between times, he produced a regular stream of articles and poetry. In 1960, he was awarded the title Commander of the British Empire. He was knighted in 1969, became poet laureate in 1972, and received numerous honorary degrees and literary honours.

In 1972, Betjeman started to experience health problems and began a long and quietly courageous battle with Parkinson's disease. Toward the end, he gave televised interviews in which he regretted both that he had not had enough sex and that his religious faith was so shaky. He died in Cornwall in May 1984 and was buried near Trebetherick in the churchyard of St. Enodoc's.

Wilson, a former candidate for Anglican ordination, is fascinated by Betjeman's waxing and waning religiosity. Throughout his life, Betjeman seesawed between deep faith in what he called "the Management" and deep doubt, as expressed at the end of his poem "In Willesden Churchyard":

> My flesh, to dissolution nearer now
> Than yours, which is so milky
> white and soft,
> Frightens me, though the Blessed
> Sacrament
> Not ten yards off in Willesden parish church
> Glows with the present immanence of God.

Like many Anglicans, Betjeman was always as much interested in the props of religion—the history, the buildings, the congregations, the vestments, the liturgy, the music, the cadences of the Book of Common Prayer—as in the truth of the Christian message. For him, Anglicanism became a central requirement of English scenery and identity, and of his own identity. ("Religion fitted him like an old slipper," Wilson observes neatly.) He never really forgave his wife for converting to Catholicism in 1947. He saw a specifically English God in specifically English suburban settings, just as William Blake saw angels in the trees at Peckham Rye. Religion was both a crutch to support him against looming decrepitude and death, and a source of feelings of inadequacy—especially in respect of his lusts and lapses, most importantly his 30-year extramarital affair with Elizabeth Cavendish, sister of the duke of Devonshire. His combination of understated patriotism and a dislike of religious dogmatism are exceedingly English.

What is it about Betjeman's poetry that makes it simultaneously risible to the "intelligentsia" (although Philip Larkin, Evelyn Waugh, R.S. Thomas, and John Piper were Betjeman fans, to name just a few), yet so hugely appealing to the general public? It has to be said that Betjeman sometimes is more poetaster than poet. A good example of his not trying very hard is cited by Wilson: "Dear Mary, / Yes, it will be bliss / To go with you by train to Diss." This is perilously close to MacGonagallism. Yet even the worst poems contain sincere emotions and good lines, and far from being "nasty and hasty," Wilson gives credit where credit is due. (He, incidentally, is not incapable of writing such sentences as "the sea off these dramatic cliffs [of North Cornwall] is not man's friend.")

The poet's lasting popularity is owing simply to the fact that, as Wilson puts it, "At some visceral level, [Betjeman]

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speaks for England." It is not just his appealing "telly" persona but his comforting subject matter: class, public school, varsity, eccentric lords and dons and vicars, sprawling suburbs, Victorian villas, golf clubs, dusty Nonconformist chapels, empty Anglican churches, gentle religious doubts, ghost stories, seaside holidays, quiet countryside, youthful bicycle rides, birthday parties, muffins, tea and—not least—what Wilson calls "feelings of abject love and longing."

All of these homely subjects are described without artifice, yet also without condescension—besprinkled with brand names we all know or have heard, described in a pleasing voice littered with archaic pronunciations ("goff" instead of *golf*, "otel" for *hotel*), and fragrant with memories of old hopes and disappointments, like the lingering smell of perfume in a long-emptied bottle. And behind all the massed detail is the evident vulnerability of a man who combined everyday overconfidence with existential terror.

In "By the Ninth Green, St Enodoc," Betjeman wonders of childhood memories, "Why is it that a sunlit second sticks?" It sticks because some detail—a new color, smell, or sound, or an unexpected angle—fixes it forever in our minds. Betjeman's adroit manipulation of details makes his poems stick in our minds. Soon, we start to feel that he is telling us about our own memories. He is a Boswell for the middle-class Everyman.

The poems are also full of "death, and failure, and disappointment, and greed." Wilson cites Betjeman's imagined English pensioners living on the Costa Blanca: "Our savings gone, we climb the stony path. / Back to the house with scorpions in the bath." There is a world of sere despair in those lines. Betjeman's generic good humor did not preclude hatred for the tawdriness, mean-spiritedness, and money-grubbing of modern Britain. He loathed seeing "toilets where the cattle stood" ("Delectable Duchy"). He apostrophized "Inexpensive Progress": "Encase your legs in nylons, / Bestride your hills with pylons / O, age without a soul." He excoriated modern farming: "We spray the fields and scatter / The poison on the ground" ("Harvest Hymn"). Rhetoric of this kind will always appeal to the English, in whom romantic longings for a bucolic, prelapsarian past run deeply.

Betjeman's writings are also gilded with the ineffable magic of that now almost completely eclipsed England of grand aristocratic houses combined with a vital middle-class culture of moral rectitude, Italianate villas with names like "Windy Ridge" and their own gravel drives and privet hedges, where lived pretty girls with double-barreled names who were the objects of Betjeman's usually unavailing, usually unexpressed passions. Such subjects were always bound to alienate the sort of person who feels that England is boring and bland and that such everyday, established things are beneath notice. For Betjeman, wisdom was always "humble love for what we sought and knew" (*Summoned by Bells*). Those who poured contempt on his work were searching for very different things and seeking to distance themselves from what they already knew and should have loved much better.

His ecological and architectural concerns now seem mainstream (thanks, in part, to his own efforts and those of others such as James Lees-Milne), but, at the time, he and they were ridiculed by the same "intelligentsia" who were then busily facilitating the mass immigration, multiculturalism, family breakdown, punitive taxation, transfer of national independence to the European Union, and wanton destruction of beauty that have now all but extinguished England.

Many members of this "intelligentsia" also resented the fact that Betjeman never joined in their various moral spasms. While they were concerning themselves with Franco's Spain, anticolonialism, civil rights, nuclear disarmament, vegetarianism, or the iniquity of sex discrimination, Betjeman was campaigning on behalf of threatened cemeteries and terraces, or rhapsodizing about bossy girls "furnished and burnished by Aldershot sun." He never promoted any ideology, but took people and things at their face value and on their own terms.

Betjeman always hated easy answers and the prigs who proffered them. In the 1920's, when many of his peers were parading their nonbelief, he was on his knees seeking absolution in chapels, churches, and Quaker meeting places. When they were aspiring downward and seeking "solidarity" with the purportedly downtrodden, Betjeman aspired upward instead. He always liked to strike attitudes and maintain friendships (with aristocrats, or with the Mosleys—although he disliked fascism, calling Mosley's chief ideologue, Alexander Raven-Thompson, "Alexander Raving Looney") that flouted received collective opinion. Hugo Williams puts it well in his Introduction to Faber's new selection of Betjeman's poetry, *Poet to Poet*: "Instead of a manifesto we get the whole man."

When they were expressed at all, Betjeman's political ideals were always conveyed subtly, as in "Death of King George V," whose generation was composed, in the poet's eyes, of "Old men who never cheated, never doubted"—a generation succeeded by that of Edward VIII, whose style is typified by his arrival "At the new suburb stretched beyond the run-way / Where a young man lands hatless from the air." In this masterfully restrained poem is expressed Betjeman's generic distrust of change, whether political, cultural, or aesthetic—this change exemplified by the mean buildings surrounding Croydon aerodrome (then London's airport). Edward's not wearing a hat gives the irresistible inference that he—or, at least, his relatively informal generation—is not really to be trusted.

The final compulsive ingredient in the Betjeman broth, bubbling up like a spring through everything he wrote, is irrepressible good humor. Millions of Britons share the memory of his round impish face as he imagines what a prim English lady in twinset and pearls might be reading (the worst kind of slangy American detective story), or can picture him as he stands, drink in hand, laughing for eternity in a bosky garden, as seen on the dust jacket of this book. For Betjeman, laughter was always his saving grace. He once made the Chestertonian remark that "no real mirth is possible without the apprehension of the mysteries as its antecedent." For him, the sacred and the profane became increasingly intermingled—and gentle fun, a means of keeping the gathering darkness at bay. In "The Last Laugh," he pleaded:

> I made hay while the sun shone.
> My work sold.
> Now, if the harvest is over
> And the world cold,
> Give me the bonus of laughter
> As I lose hold.

All in all, it is easy to see why John Betjeman should be a latter-day English icon, honored as much for his universal insights as for his quiet commitment to England, home, and beauty. It is pleasing to think that, through A.N. Wilson's insightful and accessible biography, future generations may be summoned by Betjeman to the defense of their still beautiful and now even more beleaguered homeland. ◇

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The Soul of a Poet

by Joseph Pearce

The Solzhenitsyn Reader: New and Essential Writings, 1947-2005
edited by Edward E. Ericson, Jr., and Daniel J. Mahoney
Wilmington, DE: ISI Books; 634 pp., $30.00

◆

My generation is perhaps the last to whom the figure of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn looms as large as a legend. I have vague, hazy recollections as a boy, and as a teenager, of the man in the news who was depicted as a hero against Soviet totalitarianism. I was eight when Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Soviet Writers' Union, nine when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature, and thirteen when he was forced into exile—first in Switzerland, and then in the United States. Back then, all that I really knew about the Russian was that he was famous. His picture was as familiar to me as that of the most famous politicians. His imposing beard, his stern expression, and his lofty brow made him instantly recognizable. He was, to employ the modern inane label, a celebrity. It was only later, when I read *The Gulag Archipelago* around the age of 17, that I fully realized that the lofty brow was also a highbrow, that the imposing presence had as much to do with the wisdom of what he said as with the heroism with which he said it. And when I read Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, at around the same time, it struck me that Solzhenitsyn was a real-life Winston Smith, except that the real-life version had succeeded, against all the seemingly insuperable odds, to defeat Big Brother. Fact was not merely stranger than fiction; it had a happier ending! With these experiences enshrined in my memories of him, it is easy to imagine how I felt, many years later, when Solzhenitsyn walked into the room, at his home near Moscow, to be interviewed by me for my biography of him. I was in the presence of a living icon.

The Solzhenitsyn Reader is edited by Edward E. Ericson, Jr., and Daniel J. Mahoney, two paragons of Solzhenitsyn scholarship. Their Introduction serves as a succinct biography of Solzhenitsyn's life for those unfamiliar with it and as a brief and astute critical analysis of his thought.

Having established the context in which the works should be seen and read, the editors present us with their selection of what is "new and essential" in Solzhenitsyn's work, beginning with some poetry from Solzhenitsyn's early period, which depicts his experience of World War II, the ordeal of prison, the Gulag, and internal exile. In their introduction to "Besed"—the fifth chapter of the epic poem *Dorozhen'ka* (*The Trail* or *The Way*), composed in prison between 1947 and 1952—Ericson and Mahoney make a rare error in their seeming insistence that the narrative of the poem is strictly autobiographical. Although, as a whole, the work should be read as an autobiographical narrative of Solzhenitsyn's experience and the spiritual awakening that arose from the cruelty and suffering depicted, there are surely times when the principal character, Sergei Nerzhin, is a composite of Solzhenitsyn's experience, incorporating the deeds of men he had witnessed and the actions of others merely reported to him by a third party. To read the poem otherwise is to deny the poet his artistic license, sacrificing the literary on the altar of the literal. Worse, since Solzhenitsyn cannot be assumed to have done everything that Nerzhin does in the poem, art is sacrificed to erroneous fact. Thankfully, such errors are rare in this volume.

Another shadow passes over this early section of poems: the one of which T.S. Eliot speaks in "The Hollow Men"—the shadow that falls between the potency and the existence. More specifically, it is the shadow that falls between the potency of Solzhenitsyn's original poems and the existence of the translations. I was struck by this when reading "Acathistus," a veritable and irrepressible hymn of thanksgiving that evokes Solzhenitsyn's gratitude for his conversion to Christianity. Even if the translation is masterful, we know that something is missing, something is lost.

It is good to see in the section allotted to Solzhenitsyn's "Stories" the inclusion of "Matryona's Home" and "Easter Procession"—the former, a masterfully understated presentation of rustic sanctity; the latter, a gratingly graphic depiction of urban vice and vacuity. The sections devoted to Solzhenitsyn's novels clearly created a problem for the editors. It would, of course, be unthinkable to exclude the novels from such a volume as this, but their inclusion in fragmentary form is far from ideal. Isolated chapters, published out of context, cannot possibly convey the sweep and swath of the plots' panoramas, nor the layers in which beauty and meaning are revealed. And yet the crime of vandalism involved in picking these novels apart is a lesser evil than the sin of omission that would have been committed in leaving them out altogether. I do wonder why *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was omitted completely when, as a short novel, it could have been included in its entirety; yet my sympathies are with the editors' insistence that a suitable place of honor be reserved for such voluminous works as *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward*, even if we have to make do with mere fragments of each.

Almost a hundred pages are dedicated to selections from *The Gulag Archipelago*, a work that actually lends itself well to this selective text-dipping. The editors' selection included here is sufficient to give a newcomer to the author's oeuvre a sense of this monument to the mania of the Soviet form of secular fundamentalism. For the vast bulk of Solzhenitsyn's readers who do not speak his native tongue, the selection from *March 1917* and *April 1917*—those parts of his epic cycle of novels, *The Red Wheel*, that have not yet been fully published in English—will be most welcome, as will the excerpts from *Two Hundred Years Together*, his recent controversial study of the Jews in Russia. It was also heartening to discover parts of *Russia in Collapse*, another recent work, but a little disappointing to find that space was not found for his earlier work, *Rebuilding Russia*, much of which retains its sociopolitical relevance not merely for Russia but for the entire world. Yet much of what is definitive of Solzhenitsyn's intellectual engagement with the modern age is to be found in the lengthy section devoted to his essays and speeches: the open letter to the Soviet Writers' Union; the Nobel lecture; the call for "self-limitation" in one of the essays published in *From Under the Rubble*; and the valedictory address to the West delivered at the International Academy of Philosophy in Liechtenstein before the author's return to Russia. And, of course, there is the indispensable Harvard address, which still serves as a touchstone or litmus test of true conservatism.

Since his repatriation, Solzhenitsyn has returned to poetry, specifically to the writing of prose poems—or miniatures, as the editors prefer to call them. Some of these are sublime and allow us to reach further into the soul of the man. Fittingly, *The*

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Solzhenitsyn Reader ends as it began, with poetry. Solzhenitsyn may be as austere as a monk, as stern as a prophet, as astute as a sage, as indefatigable as an athlete, and as mighty as a warrior, but his soul is that of a poet. It is here, in the prosodic depths, that the essential Solzhenitsyn is to be discovered.

Joseph Pearce, writer-in-residence and associate professor of literature at Ave Maria University in Naples, Florida, is the author of Solzhenitsyn: A Soul in Exile.

Waiting for Greatness

by Srdja Trifkovic

The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister: Three Who Changed the World
by John O'Sullivan
Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing; 448 pp., $27.95

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According to John O'Sullivan's version of recent history, in the fullness of time, three great conservative leaders—Ronald Reagan, Pope John Paul II, and Margaret Thatcher—came unexpectedly to occupy positions of power, to shatter post-World War II orthodoxies, to facilitate the collapse of the Soviet empire, and to make the overall revival of their institutions and societies possible.

In the preceding decade, according to the author, the three were "middle managers" in their respective establishments, disgruntled with the 1960's consensus (détente, Vatican II, Keynesianism) that enabled liberals of different hues to dominate "debate and the general direction of policy even when they were out of power." While even political and religious traditionalists sought "subtle and ingenious leaders" who could divert modernist challenges into orthodox channels, Wojtyla, Thatcher, and Reagan "all embodied such fading virtues as faith, self-reliance, and patriotism—which the modern world seemed to be leaving behind."

The manner in which the three succeeded in making it to the top against all odds and then "changing the world" is, in O'Sullivan's rendering, a morality play wrapped in a quickie book. There is Providence, saving them from assassination attempts. There is harmony, prompting them to join forces in the "miraculous" peaceful liberation of Eastern Europe from Soviet communism. There is faith, enabling them to become, in the words of the publisher's blurb,

> beacons of optimism cutting through the malaise and despair that afflicted 1970s America, strike-ridden and economically moribund post-imperial Britain, and a Catholic Church rocked by social and sexual revolutions.

And the end result was a reinvigorated West.

Once the outline is in place, O'Sullivan picks and chooses, sometimes cleverly, the tiles to fit into his preconceived mosaic. We follow Reagan's, Thatcher's, and Wojtyla's presumed maturation as strong leaders. Their key moments are said to be the pope's visit to his native Poland in 1979; Thatcher's resolute response to the Falklands crisis in 1982; and Reagan's adoption of Peace Through Strength embodied in the Strategic Defense Initiative.

O'Sullivan's approach reflects his inability to distinguish between the factual truth of who did what to whom in a highly complex decade, and his version of a "higher" truthfulness. The result is a collection of overextended essays that is historically inaccurate, analytically inadequate, and biographically oversimplified. As a 3,000-word *National Review* article, the compendium could have become a quaintly Rankean piece of highbrow journalism. As a book, however, *The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister* fails to inform, enlighten, or even amuse.

When it came to the trio in question, there was always less than meets the eye. The proof of the smoke, and the absence of real fire, lies in their legacy. The Catholic Church is not in good shape, as Pope Benedict XVI is all too painfully aware. Reagan and Thatcher were followed by nonentities (John Major), state-capitalist establishmentarians (George H.W. Bush), malevolent crooks (Bill Clinton), velvet-gloved totalitarians (Tony Blair), and dangerously deluded millenarians (George W. Bush). All three had their conservative moments and conservative aspects, but none was a Great Conservative Leader. It may be far too early to judge their overall impact, but it is preposterous to assert—as O'Sullivan does—that it had a world-historical significance.

O'Sullivan's treatment of Margaret Thatcher, in particular, borders on a Politburo-approved hagiography. (For a more accurate account, see the late Sir Alfred Sherman's *Paradoxes of Power: Reflections on the Thatcher Interlude*, which came out in paperback last March.) Her "legacy" is a postmodern, self-loathing Britain on the fast track to cultural and demographic self-annihilation.

As we know through 16 years of hindsight, the collapse of the Soviet Empire was, above all, a crumbling from within brought on by the rush to reform. Gorbachev's motives were primarily domestic and economic. His rationale for embarking on *glasnost*, and the manner in which *perestroika* subsequently escaped his control, were affected, but by no means determined, by the challenges posed by Solidarity (Wojtyla) and America's rearming (Reagan); Thatcher and her little war in the South Atlantic were utterly irrelevant.

Whether a truly great pope and an equally great American president (forget prime ministers) may yet stem the tide and "change the world" is uncertain. What is certain is that the Western world is in peril and needs changing.

Srdja Trifkovic is Chronicles' *foreign-affairs editor.*

Surprise! Surprise!

by Clyde Wilson

Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited From Slavery
by Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jennifer Frank
New York: Ballantine Books; 269 pp., $25.95

◆

In 1988, I wrote in a review in these pages, "If there is any young historian out there who wants to know where the cutting edge is in American historical understanding, it is . . . the new and coming field of Northern history." *Complicity* is one of a half-dozen or more books published in the past few years that have fulfilled my prophecy about the direction of new research. (Others that might

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be mentioned are Susan-Mary Grant's *North Over South* and Joan Pope Melish's *Disowning Slavery*.)

Actually, I did not prophesy at all, but merely said what was obvious to anyone who was thinking about American history, rather than, in the normal professorial way, thinking about how to hitch a ride on the prevailing fashions in historiography.

The authors of *Complicity* are three Hartford, Connecticut, newspersons who, in the course of delving into their state's history, discovered all sorts of (to them) shocking things. There were slaves in Connecticut! There were even (gasp!) plantations in Connecticut as terrible as those in the South (shudder!). New Englanders participated in the slave trade and the profits of slavery. Northerners of the 18th and 19th centuries were white supremacists. Northerners continued, even after slavery, to exploit black people from afar—for instance, Connecticut's famous piano manufacturing depended on ivory brutally extracted from the Belgian Congo.

There is really nothing about any of this that should be surprising. The authors' gee-whiz attitude toward what ought to be common knowledge is testimony to the power of the American mythology of the Virtuous Nation. All evil is located in the South, requiring Americans (the North) to cross the Potomac now and then to stomp on the evildoers threatening to contaminate pure and shining America. The power of the mythology also draws upon a childishly simplistic view of human affairs, painfully evident in our empire's foreign policy as we write. Real life (and, thus, history) is more complicated than that: For instance, the authors tell the story of the Mississippi slaveholders and public officials who conscientiously returned to their Northern homes free black people who had been kidnapped by Yankees for sale.

Actually, the authors have only glimpsed the tip of the iceberg. It will take many more books to tell aspects of the truth that they have not yet discovered. Most of the Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut signers of the Declaration of Independence were slaveholders, like their Southern colleagues. Massachusetts had the first formal slave code. When young John C. Calhoun of South Carolina went to college in New Haven, Connecticut, in the early 1800's, he did not move from the land of slavery to the land of freedom. Most well-to-do families there owned at least a few black people. (And they still talked a lot about states' rights, too.) Emancipation in the North was gradual and resulted in little improvement in the lives of the emancipated. Some of our authors' Connecticut slaveholders moved operations to Louisiana sugar plantations before emancipation took effect, and New Englanders were always big investors there.

The foreign slave trade, far more brutal and sanguinary than the Southern plantation slavery of the late antebellum era, was, so far as Americans were concerned, a New England enterprise. After the importation of slaves to the United States was outlawed in 1808, Yankees remained for another half-century significantly invested in the profitable business of transporting Africans to Cuba and Brazil (not to mention the Chinese opium trade). Another of those monkey wrenches that reality throws into conveniently imagined history: Southern public officials and naval officers worked to shut down the illegal slave trade, whereas Northern public opinion protected the traders, usually men from prominent families, when they were caught. Even during and *after* the Civil War, New Englanders of the finest and most progressive families continued to own lucrative slave plantations in Cuba. (Young historians, take note.)

The American public has seemed of late to have some desire for a closer look at the mythology of our unique virtue and innocence, with well-selling books that question the painted and perfumed image of Father Abraham and his war against the Union. But there is still a long way to go before the unearned Treasury of Virtue (as Robert Penn Warren called it) gathered around emancipation ceases to distort Americans' perception of themselves. (I assume that the study of history ought to make us wiser rather than more self-righteous.) As Frederick Douglass pointed out, any benefits that accrued to black people from the Civil War and Reconstruction were not the result of benevolence but incidental to the interests of Northern whites. Tocqueville observed that Southerners exhibited less race hatred than Northerners. New England's greatest sage, Emerson, opposed slavery because he thought it contaminated whites. Deprived of the protection of slavery, the blacks would die off and become as extinct as the dodo. Freed of contaminating blacks and contaminated Southerners, America would achieve her destiny to be a pure and shining New England writ large, the vanguard of humanity's upward march.

Clyde Wilson was a professor of history, but is recovering nicely.

Un Monstre étrange

by Catharine Savage Brosman

The Theatre of Illusion
by Pierre Corneille;
translated by Richard Wilbur
New York: Harcourt; 132 pp., $12.00

◆

To translate a play by Corneille (1606-84), one of the "big three" dramatists (along with Racine and Molière) of the classical period in France, is to challenge most trends of contemporary American taste, starting with the reigning, and deplorable, standards of behavior and language. Corneille's plays are in rhymed alexandrine couplets; the diction is elevated and marked by classical rhetorical devices, including parallelism, metonymy, periphrasis, litotes, and chiasmus; the range of social types is limited; *les bienséances* (proprieties, dictating what may be shown and said) are normally respected; the three unities of time, place, and action ordinarily pose restrictions on plot; and dominant concerns often include honor, standing, and matters of state. That *L'Illusion comique* departs from this model in significant ways does not make it, at first glance, less alien to current taste, which it challenges in some ways even more than a tightly knit tragedy such as Racine's *Phèdre*. Richard Wilbur, who has received Bollingen and PEN awards for previous translations and who, for his own poetry, won the National Book Award and two Pulitzer Prizes, deserves thanks, along with the publisher, for putting out this very artistic translation. In recent years, several other renderings have appeared in Great Britain, the United States, and Canada, including a version "freely adapted" by Tony Kushner under the title *The Illusion*; but Wilbur is by far the most eminent and the most skilful of those who have taken up the task.

Known chiefly for his tragicomedy *Le Cid* and tragedies such as *Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte*, Corneille also wrote several comedies, chiefly at the outset of his career. *L'Illusion comique* is an elab-

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orate illustration of his comedic talent, though it includes a quasitragic vein also. Because of its mixed tones and complex construction—a "pot-pourri," as Jacques Maurens wrote—it has sometimes been called "baroque" or, to quote Corneille himself, "bizarre," "extravagant," "a strange monster." It was first produced sometime during the season 1635-36 (the best authorities decline to specify a date) by the troupe for which he normally wrote, at the Théâtre du Marais. After remaining on the boards for some 25 years, the play fell out of favor. A revival in 1861 was based on a greatly mutilated script, the fourth act being omitted and the fifth replaced by material from another play. Only in 1937 was the original text brought back to the stage, at the Comédie-Française, by Louis Jouvet, a producer and actor of genius.

The play is complicated, not to say incoherent, as one critic asserted; it operates on more than one level, its various plots all underlying the principal theme, that of art, in the sense of "illusion"—the business of the theater. First, there is an outer framework, which observes the three unities; it concerns Pridamant, a gentleman "in declining years" who has searched in vain for his son, Clindor, whom he had driven away by harshness. Through a friend's good offices, Pridamant is led to consult a wizard, by whose magic he hopes to discover what has happened to the youth. The magician, who speaks ambiguously of "art" (meaning "artifice"), does indeed reveal, gradually, Clindor's story—its first part presented as narrative summary, the rest dramatized in the wizard's grotto as a purported magic show by "spirits who put on a mortal guise," as Wilbur phrases it. This framed action, or play-within-the-play, is explained rationally if one understands that the son, after exercising other trades and practicing quackery, now belongs to a theatrical troupe, which acts out his story. But it is taken as genuine magic by Pridamant and, presumably, by audiences who "suspend disbelief," unless they otherwise catch clues or know that the stage directions call "actors' costumes" the fine clothes displayed as the young man's wardrobe. The action of this inner drama is first comic, even farcical, but then turns tragic as the actors perform a drama—at a third level—in which Clindor portrays the unfaithful Théagène, killed by a jealous husband's squire. When this drama ends, the distraught and credulous father believes Clindor is truly dead, although the magician had assured him that the son had found happiness. Then comes a new revelation. All that has just gone on is merely playacting, without vital connection to Clindor; a curtain is drawn back, and the company of actors appears. While Pridamant is delighted to find Clindor alive, he is disturbed by his choice of profession; but the wizard, in an apology for the theater, describes acting as both a lucrative and an honorable occupation (a reflection of the times; Richelieu himself had given the theater his approbation).

The topics of illusion and playacting, with the associated theme of life as a dream, obviously suited the theater well. Shakespeare and Molière (in *L'Impromptu de Versailles*) as well as Corneille drew on them, and, in 1635, Georges de Scudéry published *La Comédie des comédiens* (*The Actors' Comedy*), centered around a dramatic troupe. Interplay between illusion and reality, or competing realities, was developed further in 18th-century fiction by Sterne, Diderot, and others who used structural devices such as multiple layers of plot and authorial intervention. Modernists, including Gide, Unamuno, Pirandello, and Aldous Huxley, revived some of these techniques and developed others that played with distinctions between appearances and reality. The same year in which Jouvet revived Corneille's play, he also produced Jean Giraudoux's curtain-raiser concerning theatrical art, *L'Impromptu de Paris* (an echo of Molière); in addition, Giraudoux's *Ondine* (1939) and other dramas of his dealt with the subject obliquely. The play between reality and appearance, the relationships between life and art, and competing levels of fiction, to which modern audiences had become attuned, were developed later in the 20th century by Borges, Beckett, and French novelists such as Butor and Robbe-Grillet. In calling Corneille's comedy a "house of mirrors," Wilbur underlines its connections to the reflections-within-reflections construction favored by these authors.

In a play that deals, essentially, with acting, it is not surprising that Corneille presents well-known stage types easily recognized by his audiences: the boastful miles gloriosus, known since Plautus—in this case, a Gascon called Matamore—with his rodomontades (overblown, vainglorious rhetoric, named for Ariosto's Rodomont), his cowardice, and his implausible claims as a lover; the unbending father, who here opposes his daughter Isabelle's love for Clindor and wishes to marry her to another; the *pícaro*, that is, Clindor, who has lived by expedients; the resourceful servant girl. What is striking is the way in which certain characters depart from stock patterns. The servant girl challenges her mistress, Isabelle, because she, too, loves Clindor; she betrays her, then changes her mind and helps save her (in, as Wilbur points out, an exercise in heroic generosity and self-mastery that foreshadows Corneille's tragedies). Clindor, unlike faithful lovers in most classical comedies, dallies with other women. A jailor, instead of playing only a utility role, exercises his imagination and briefly deceives Clindor by a pleasing theatrical trick.

Wilbur has generally respected the plot and scenic construction of the original, being so scrupulous as to render each speech, generally, in the same number of lines. In Act Five, he does condense some material and omits one scene—quite dispensable, since Corneille himself deleted it in his modified version of 1660. A master of formal verse, Wilbur has wittily imitated Corneille's alexandrines in iambic pentameters, occasionally irregular, with some feminine rhymes and run-on lines. The language flows easily and without awkwardness, as when Isabelle tries to discourage the unwelcome suitor:

> We've often differed in the terms
> we chose:
> What I would call a thorn, you call
> a rose;
> What you call faithfulness and
> constancy
> Are persecution and duress to me.

A few contemporary phrasings are amusingly incorporated also, including that cliché of many bad films, "Let's get out of here."

Why should one acquire and read work such as this? The first answer is that it beckons to us. Like most good dramatic writing, *The Theatre of Illusion* takes us into a different world: in this case, a double one, that of the play—an enchantment—and that of its historical period, distant but whose literary styles and themes remain easily within our ken and can offer unusual pleasures. Second, do we not wish to support the arts? This is literary art of a high quality, in its original and as translated here. Both publisher and translator deserve our support. Of course, innumerable art organizations and foundations, local and national, exist to underwrite (on behalf of the public) artistic endeavors.

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But older, conventional *belles-lettres* are not flashy, nor "cutting edge"; moreover, arts councils prefer performance-oriented undertakings and tend to favor those whom Cyril Connolly called (disparagingly) "cultural diffusionists." Corneille's work will not seduce many bureaucrats. It could lend itself to performance, of course (Wilbur adds occasional stress marks to facilitate oral reading), but, until it is brought to the stage, it remains material for one's library. We owe a great deal to literature; this modestly priced book is well worth our attention.

Catharine Savage Brosman is poetry editor for Chronicles.

We the People

by Jonathan Ellis

Fame Junkies: The Hidden Truths Behind America's Favorite Addiction
by Jake Halpern
New York: Houghton Mifflin; 226 pp., $23.00

◆

Anna Nicole Smith's departure from earth and pop singer Britney Spears' descent into madness riveted a good chunk of the nation. Smith's only real talent was in her chest, and, by all appearances, she was at least mildly retarded. Spears, who took a room at a rehab facility after shaving her head, is probably equally dull, but she is reputed to be capable of counting to ten and doing it on key.

Both women are—or, in Smith's case, were—perfect celebrities for our age: untalented, unintelligent, unhinged, and totally beloved and admired by legions of our countrymen. We know this, because FOX News devoted many hours of coverage to the Smith-Spears sagas, and no news organization has a better feel for what the morons in America are clamoring for than FOX.

Certainly, some civic-minded scolds probably fired off disapproving e-mails to the cable- and network-news shows, but those news producers who call the shots know that the masses like their celebrity news. Jake Halpern tours the world of fame-addled America and declares that many celebrities "have little of real value to teach." Halpern makes this rather obvious observation about halfway through his book. It is a rare editorial comment from him, one he makes after reporting on a theory offered by two evolutionary anthropologists from Emory University.

Called Prestige Theory, it presumes to account for why people are so eager to chum up to celebrities. As Halpern explains it, talented hunters in primitive times were revered by their fellow tribesmen. Bad or moderately good hunters gravitated toward the skilled ones, hoping to learn from them and, thus, attract mates. The disciples who gathered around the stars were willing to do favors for them. Fast forward a few thousand years, and the Prestige Theory explains why even the moderately famous have posses of hangers-on, toadies willing to do anything for their celebrity.

I am not sure about Prestige Theory, or about any of the other evolutionary or psychological theories that Halpern explores on his quest to learn why Americans are so smitten with celebrities. Some of them are interesting, such as psychological studies showing that shy, lonely people are more likely to waste hours of their lives obsessing over their favorite celebrities.

More interesting are the various stops Halpern makes in the book. We have all seen the drooling stargazers screaming for autographs. What many of us haven't seen, however, is a convention with children and young adults performing for the attention of a few agents who are on hand to scout for new talent. The performers pay enormous fees in order to participate. Those lucky few who are plucked from the masses by agents are sent on a path that could end in stardom, but the odds are so stacked against them that they would probably be better off investing in lottery tickets.

These conventions play on the hopes of young people that they, too, can become famous. Halpern concludes that more young people than ever are convinced that they will be famous. They "are predisposed to having daily delusions of grandeur in which they feel as if they are playing the lead in epic movies about themselves."

Those lucky few who find work in Hollywood are mostly destined to struggle as second- and third-class citizens. Halpern visits a gated community outside Hollywood where actors ply their trade. Many are children, living on site with parents or other relatives. Some scrape by, earning enough money through commercials or bit parts in television and movies. Others are going into debt trying to break in. Several child actors and parents tell Halpern that they have no intention of returning to their drab lives in Middle America. The action is in Hollywood.

People have always been enamored with celebrity, Halpern says, but the advent of television and the internet have made it much easier to keep tabs on your favorite crooner or actor. Heck, you can do it from work. With the World Wide Web, fan clubs have exploded in number. Now, even third- and fourth-rate celebs have online gathering places where fans can share gossip and fantasies.

Is all of this bad? Halpern ventures to say that we could be creating a generation of narcissists, but that's not a novel criticism. Halpern is a fine reporter. His writing is by no means flashy, but he goes to interesting places, does his research, and makes some keen observations. What he does not do in any depth, however, is try to assess what it means for a society to have a large population of people who are, at varying degrees, obsessed with fame and celebrity, either their own or somebody else's.

It's a harmless hobby for the vast majority of people who indulge in celebrity news. They hold down jobs, spend time with family, pay their taxes. It's not as if they're committing armed robbery to buy their next fix of *People*.

My guess is that people who find refuge in the world of celebrity news are typically those out of touch with their culture and history, with basic economics, with their city council or county commission. They are the sort who, if pried away from *Entertainment Tonight* long enough to listen, will nod when they hear an unlearned president tell them that a certain country in the Middle East has been found to possess a propeller-driven airplane, which has been outfitted with a device that could allow it to spray chemical or biological weapons. This airplane poses a direct threat to the world's only superpower, and so the country in the Middle East should be dispatched with an armed invasion.

They are among the ignorant masses who thought America could invade a primitive Middle Eastern country, establish a "democracy," and make the region safe for movie theaters. If we're lucky, more and more of them will become too preoccupied with their fantasies to vote.

Jonathan Ellis writes from Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

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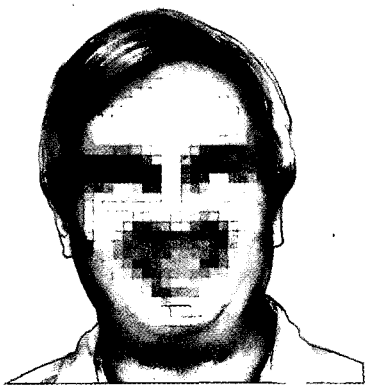
by Joe Ecclesia

Abysmal Answers



Your Excellency:

In June, I began reading *The Inferno*. This is my first excursion into Danteland, as I like to call it. (What do you think, Your Excellency? Wouldn't *The Divine Comedy* make a great theme park? "Visit Danteland! Have the hell scared out of you! Get a taste of heaven!" Think of the rides, Your Excellency, the costumes, the refreshments, the revenues.) I intended to finish the entire work by summer's end, but my progress is slow, in part because I keep dozing off. It is not the Florentine's verse that renders me unconscious, but heat and exhaustion; my apartment has no air-conditioner, and I sleep poorly, an insomnia doubtless derived from my age and a bad conscience. (Last year during a root canal, I actually dozed off with my mouth full of dental instruments.) At any rate, I am still stuck in hell, which is the subject of my letter to you. Not a thought to console the sleepless, eh, Your Excellency?

I seek clarification in regard to Church teaching on Hell. After reading *The Inferno*—some of Dante's fiery regions, by the way, bring to mind certain South Florida shopping malls—I decided I really don't ever want to go to Hell, not even for a visit. (I teach the *Aeneid* to Advanced Placement students, but would prefer meeting Virgil in a cooler climate.) Certainly, Your Excellency, I have no desire to be condemned to Hell for an eternity, which, as you know, is a pretty long time.

At first, I was uncertain whether the Church shared my newfound concern for blaze and brimstone. In 15 years as a Catholic, I have heard only one priest mention Hell from the pulpit. Perhaps, I thought, the Church in Her wisdom had decided that Hell, like Limbo, no longer exists. To be on the safe side, I consulted my Catechism, but found to my horror the contrary to be true. Not only does the Church affirm the existence of "the unquenchable fire," She also teaches that Hell is like the Kiwanis Club: pretty much anyone is eligible for membership. The Catechism quotes Our Lord here: "[T]he gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many."

Was it possible, I wondered, that Christ was just putting on His followers? After all, who could resist teasing guys like Peter and Thomas? This conjecture comforted me until I googled the subject, whereupon I learned that Jesus mentioned Hell 70 times. That's 69 more times than I've heard in all the Masses I have attended.

My speculations regarding Hell have given rise to some confusion. I hope you can help me with the items I have enumerated below.

First, is Dante correct? Does Hell provide special punishments for different offenses? How will a telemarketer be punished? What sort of agonies might be meted out to an afternoon talk-show host? The possibilities seem endless.

Second, our Catholic homeschool group recently fought a savage war of words. Several members loosed their tongues while simultaneously losing their minds. A few offenders have rejected reconciliation with their fellow Catholics. Question: Will otherwise good Catholics go to Hell for such offenses, or does God take under consideration such circumstances as menopause, inflated egos, and male mid-life crises?

Third, a priest I know advocates an open-borders policy with Mexico. This same priest has declared that the Church is a reflection of Heaven on earth. Does this mean that Heaven has an open-borders policy? If, in other words, I'm sent to Hell, can I be smuggled across the border? I sure hope so. Some of my holy friends are willing to help me, but I need to get them some details. Believe me, I don't mind washing dishes in the Celestial Kitchen, as long as God grants me amnesty and a green card in perpetuity.

Fourth, was it St. John Chrysostom who said that the floors of Hell are paved with the skulls of bishops? Does that idea depress you? It would depress me if I were bishop. Anyway, my question: Chrysostom died over 1,500 years ago. What do you think Satan has done with bishops' skulls since then? Is he enlarging Hell, or is he using bishops' skulls in some other decorative fashion? Do you ever lie awake at night pondering these matters? I hope not: That sort of conjecture gives men our age insomnia.

Fifth, why doesn't the Church tell us more about Hell?

Some priests resist addressing certain topics from the pulpit—abortion, homosexuality, adultery—for fear of offending parishioners. Please reassure them that Hell is a safe homiletic topic. The average parishioner, like most Americans, automatically assumes that he himself is not bound for the Abyss. This same parishioner will therefore believe that the priest considers his fellow pew-warmers candidates for Hell, a prospect that will secretly delight the parishioner and keep his attention.

Let me close with a proposition, Your Excellency. This afternoon, beneath a blazing sun, I sat for one hour on the asphalt roof that serves as my porch. I ate salty nacho chips dipped in hot salsa. I forbade myself liquid refreshment. I randomly selected an insurance agent from the Yellow Pages and spent half an hour on the phone with him discussing term life. I spent the next 30 minutes watching my neighbor's home movies on a portable television. With some fine-tuning, I believe I can create a passable imitation of Hell and would be delighted to reproduce this vision of the fiery furnace in workshops throughout the diocese. Interested?

Wishing you eternally cool breezes,
Your Excellency,

Joe Ecclesia

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by Scott P. Richert

A Light Out of the Dim

How did an eighth-generation German-American growing up in Rockford, Illinois, proud of his ethnic heritage, baptized Lutheran, educated in Catholic schools, come to convert to Islam? As Aaron, "Abdul," and I sit down at the Richard John Neuhaus Memorial Conference Table, that question hangs in the air.

"I came from a broken family, basically," Abdul begins. In 1973, when Abdul was born, his father was 17 and getting ready to leave for Vietnam. (He would do two tours of duty.) His mother was 14 or 15 and living in New Jersey. His ancestors had lived in Winnebago County for over a century, and his extended family decided that it would be best for all concerned if Abdul was brought up in Rockford by his great-grandparents.

His great-grandfather never wanted to discuss religion or politics, though he would ask his wife why she, a devout Lutheran, would donate baked goods to St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church, in southwest Rockford, for fundraisers. Most of his great-grandmother's friends were Catholic, including the head of the Altar Rosary Society at St. Anthony's, and she enrolled Abdul in kindergarten at St. Anthony's school, a few blocks away from their home on Loomis Street. The neighborhood had been heavily Italian, but, starting in the late 1940's, Italian grocers and factory workers who had the money to do so moved out, many into brick ranch homes in new subdivisions on Rockford's northwest side. The construction of Boylan Catholic High School in the new neighborhood in 1960, and the influx of blacks in the old neighborhood throughout the decade (ending in race riots), accelerated the migration.

Through it all, St. Anthony's, the school, and the walled convent of the cloistered Poor Clares nuns just to the south provided stability to the neighborhood. Abdul was a shy boy who had few friends, but he recalls his days at St. Anthony's school, including the fabled Catholic-school strictness, fondly. Outside of class, he spent much time attending Mass, studying "creeds and ecumenical councils," visiting the nuns and buying their handmade wall rosaries—living, in other words, as a Catholic without the benefit of actual conversion.

From the beginning, then, Abdul's religious observance was characterized by religious practice rather than by the self-caricatured faith of many modern American Christians who are always looking for "A Different Way to Do Church!" He longed for structure, uniformity, strictness of practice—all of which he regarded as part of the beauty of religion—and, for a little under a decade, he found it in Catholicism.

By 1984, however, his great-grandparents moved him out of St. Anthony's for financial reasons, and he spent a couple years at Barber, a public school, before attending West High School. When West was closed, Abdul was bused to East High, across the city from his neighborhood.

His intellectual interests had broadened to include religion in general—but "not Hinduism; I never had any interest in polytheism" (though he had a cultural interest in both American Indian religions and Germanic paganism). His great-grandfather would take him to the bookstore to pick out scholarly works on his latest religious interest, and, one day when he was 15, while looking for books on German paganism, he stumbled across an English translation of the Koran and asked his great-grandfather if he could buy it. Neither knew anything about Islam, but his great-grandfather purchased the book for him.

His initial experience with the Koran was frustrating. The English translation was literal and had very few notes, and the modern arrangement of the Koran—from the longest *suras* (or chapters) to the shortest, rather than chronological or topical order—added to his confusion. Traditional Christians—Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, some mainline Protestants—understand that it is not wise to approach the Bible without proper instruction or outside the context of the Church and Her traditions (especially the liturgy).

The Koran, however, is another case altogether. Read in a vacuum, outside of a Muslim community (or, for a non-Muslim, outside of an extensive study of the historical circumstances in which the Koran was written), it is, at best, incomprehensible, and, at worst, easily twisted to support one's own political or religious ideology—as, Abdul argues, many (even most) Muslim immigrants to the United States have done.

Disappointed in his studies, Abdul set the Koran aside. Then, "I met an African-American in my neighborhood" who convinced him that he shouldn't read the Koran by itself but should start by reading the *hadith*, the sayings of Muhammad, which are, in orthodox Islam, the first line of interpretation of the Koran. He restarted his studies and, slowly, began to make some sense of Islam's holy book.

By now, Abdul was in high school, a good student with excellent language skills, still shy but participating in sports. Stocky, and of average height, he was a running back on the East High football team, combining speed with physical determination. Even as a teenager, he was unhappy with the moral state of American culture, but he did date, and he fell in love with his high-school sweetheart. She was an Egyptian, living in Rockford; her mother was a Muslim, and her father, a famous artist and sculptor, was a Christian.

Unbeknownst to his classmates, he continued studying Islam and began to see in it the strictness that he had admired in Catholicism. "I went to a Catholic school and became a Muslim," he says, with no sense of irony. "I needed structure," and Islam, like Catholicism, stood against the moral degradation of the culture that had continued, or even accelerated, under Ronald Reagan's "Morning in America."

Abdul wasn't studying Islam exclusively, however. He took Christian correspondence courses from the International College of Biblical Theology, and two doubts about Christianity began to form in his mind. The first concerned the idea that Christ had died to take away the sins of all, and yet, in order to be saved, each person had to believe in Christ. Why was

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that personal faith necessary? "If Jesus had died to take away our sins, why were only those who believed in Him saved?" He later, of course, would come to embrace the Muslim teaching against Original Sin and to adopt what Christians regard as the Pelagianism of Islam—the idea of salvation through practice rather than through faith that comes by the free gift of grace—but at that time, he was puzzled, as so many Christians are today, by this most biblical of Christian doctrines.

His second doubt was similar: Why did it take 300 years to compose a Nicene Creed and to confirm, as articles of faith, the divinity of Christ and the mystery of the Holy Trinity? The gap in time, he began to believe, made Christianity seem incomplete at the time of its origin. Again, this doubt wasn't new to Abdul: Christian sects for over 500 years have tried to recover an "ante-Nicene" Christianity, with some explicitly adopting a form of Arianism, denying the divinity of Christ, while many others, especially in America over the last century, have simply fallen into a practical combination of Arianism and Pelagianism, by refusing to understand or examine the reasons why the Council of Nicea was convened in the first place.

While Abdul is an orthodox Muslim (and therefore obviously does not accept the divinity of Christ or the mystery of the Trinity), his concern at that time was not so much that he doubted the divinity of Christ but that he had come to believe in the need for orthodoxy to be coterminous with antiquity. He could not accept the idea of an unfolding Tradition that deepens our understanding of the Faith without contradicting any earlier understanding. This is not very different from many modern Christians who yearn for an apostolic Christianity, by which they mean not Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy but a Christianity stripped of all the accretions of history and tradition.

Abdul began to believe that, in the case of Islam, orthodoxy coincided with antiquity. Between the Koran and the *hadith*—the revelation of Allah and the sayings of Muhammad—everything was there; there was no need for further development of doctrine or practice. Indeed, Muhammad himself had said that his generation and the two following it would be the most faithful, and he predicted the rise of false prophets and doctrines after that. This made it easier to determine what is true Islam, and what is not. That which was believed by the first three generations, and that which was practiced by them, constitute orthodoxy.

Abdul uses the term *orthodoxy* to cover both what Christians mean by the word (sound doctrine) and what Christians (particularly Eastern Orthodox theologians) call orthopraxis, or right practice. This is not intellectual sloppiness on his part: In Islam, there is no real distinction between right belief and proper practice. When Abdul refers to the "structure" that Islam provides for him, he's not talking about, say, something akin to the intellectual structure of scholasticism or the theology of the Eastern Fathers, but the prescription (and proscription) of actions for virtually every circumstance of daily life. This is why Muhammad's religion is called Islam, *submission*. And it is also why so many Christians today, for whom faith is often almost completely sundered from action, have such a hard time understanding Islam or seeing it as something other than an incomplete Christianity, without benefit of Christ or the Trinity.

As Abdul moved from study into the practice of Islam, he was plagued with doubts. Though he had never actually converted to Catholicism, he still had an odd sense, he says, that his interest in Islam might be a sin, and he considered consulting the priest at St. Anthony's. Abdul, however, was uncertain what to expect. Would the priest understand Abdul's interest in Islam, or would he simply dismiss it? Would he even talk to him, or would he tell him that, since Abdul wasn't a Catholic, they had nothing to discuss? Today, Abdul seems to realize that those concerns were overblown. In the end, though, he never went to see the priest.

At 17, Abdul married his high-school sweetheart in a courthouse ceremony. Both families were opposed, and the marriage would not last. He graduated from East High and went on to MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Illinois, where he planned to study social work. There, after making some Muslim friends, he began to practice Islam in earnest, and he soon decided to study Islam instead.

MacMurray, a United Methodist school, was obviously not the best place to pursue his interest, so, in 1991, Abdul and a few friends interested in studying Islam discussed their plans with leaders at the Rockford mosque. According to Abdul, Magdy Kandil, one of the board members of the Islamic school, was happy to help, and he suggested schools and teachers in Egypt. At Kandil's recommendation, Abdul and his friends decided to study with Shaykh Usaamah Al-Qoosee, a follower of Sayyid Qutb. Qutb, who received his master's degree in the United States while working for the Egyptian ministry of education, returned from America to become a prominent leader of the revolutionary Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin), which to this day advocates a pan-Islamic state governed solely by *sharia*.

When Abdul and his friends arrived in Egypt to begin their studies in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), Magdy Kandil, Abdul says, was waiting for them, proud of his new young recruits to the Ikhwani movement. He helped them find a place to live and to get settled. Abdul would stay in Egypt for a few months, and then return to the United States, before going back to Egypt to complete his *ijaza*, his license or certificate, in *fiqh*.

"In the beginning, my Islam was very much like most ideologies—that we have to establish an Islamic country, have to establish *khalifah* . . . It wasn't until the Salafis got a hold of me that they showed me things that went against that ideology, that our Prophet told us that there would be a time that we don't have a *khalifah*, and this is when the day of judgment would come." ◇

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Letter From Texas

by Egon Richard Tausch

Gott Mit Uns

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As modern imperialism grows, even the regions within those countries under its rule become homogenized. Within the subnational regions, smaller ethnic enclaves, with their diverse cultures, tend to take one of two paths. They become tourist traps where the natives are totally ignorant of their own histories, differences, and contributions to the larger groups, until, eventually, everyone wears the same garb (lederhosen, feathered hats, kilts, identical regalia), employs the same false architecture, adopts the same fake accent, sings the same pseudo folk songs, dances the only folk dance he knows, and claims the same beliefs and ideologies. Or they just die out altogether. I don't know whom this hurts worse—the larger "empire" or the enclaves. It certainly makes the world a duller place. And contrary to the philosophers, knowledge of history is its own virtue.

I first discovered this as a child. After living in Washington, D.C., for several years, my parents and I had returned to the Texas ranch that had been in our family since 1845. The culture clash between the East and Southwest was not as great as I had expected; too much time had passed. But I had been taught by my family, as well as by mounds of books, that we were Texas Germans, as was the entire Hill Country of the state, including the towns and cities of New Braunfels, Boerne, Fredericksburg, Dickinson, Seguin, Austin, San Antonio, Castroville, Hondo, up to what we still thought of as the western frontier—indeed, all of South-Central Texas.

Most of the Germans had arrived in Texas when it was still a republic, under the guidance of the Adelsverein ("The Noblemen's Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas"), led by Prince Karl von Solms-Braunfels (though he didn't stay). It was not long before over one third of all Texans were German. Before the invention of barbed wire (1875), the Texas economy was based on cotton, so the Texas Germans raised it and owned slaves, though not as many as the East Texans did. As late as the eve of U.S. entry into World War I, a rally for the kaiser was held in Boerne among the (mostly) still German-speaking blacks, with the rallying cry: "Ve Chermans haff got to schtick togedder!"

The Texas Germans went on to fight valiantly for the United States after we entered the war, despite the closing of our schools and violent harassment by groups of drunken Anglo teenagers from San Antonio. I lost two uncles to gas attacks on the Western Front.

As late as the 1950's, one could not buy groceries or feed in the small town nearest our ranch without knowing German. My grandfather founded New Braunfels High School, and almost all the textbooks were in German (though Greek and Latin—and English—were also taught). He was also the editor of the *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*, our first newspaper (since the 1850's), and cofounder of our first bank (the Guaranty State Bank). This whole section of Texas was closely knit. After all, the Germans arrived in the 1830's and 40's not knowing whether they were immigrating to Mexico, an independent Texas republic, or the United States.

Differences among groups of Texas Germans were common. The influential founders of New Braunfels were largely Prussian, atheist ("freethinkers"), and townspeople; Fredericksburg was founded by Bavarians and other southern Germans, Roman Catholics, and country folk; the German towns to the east were largely Lutheran (Evangelisch) and from all parts of Germany and all occupations. In addition, there were the Forty-Eighters.

The only question that had interested children back in Washington, D.C., was whether they were Southerners or Northerners. After all, Washington had been a Southern city for most of its history, was the center of the War Between the States, and the mid-to-late 1950's was the height of regional rivalry.

As soon as my family returned to Comal County, Texas, we ran into a similar conflict. I met the other descendants of the War Between the States. Every kid would announce that, although his own ancestors had fought for the Confederacy, everyone knew that the *other* Texas Germans had fought for the Union. About the time I concluded that the tooth fairy was a myth, I began to suspect that this Texas-Confederate history didn't make sense. If every German-American Texan I met had Confederate soldier ancestors, including three progenitors of mine, how could this ethnic group have been so pro-Union?

At the University of Texas-Austin, I studied Texas history, and, for my master's thesis, I decided to unravel the myth of German Unionism. This proved to be a hopeless task. Every textbook of Texas history I could find simply stated, without footnotes, details, or any other support, that the Texas Germans were pro-Union and were either neutral or fought for the North during the War. The only evidence given was a mention of the Nueces Massacre. The books I found on the involvement of Texas in the Confederacy produced the same scant evidence and cited only earlier general histories, which used almost the same words (and often had the same typographical errors). Those books concerning only the Texas Germans simply skipped the crisis of the South in which the Texas Germans played so great a part.

Several years ago, the myth of German Unionism reached its climax in a series of newspaper columns by the late Maury Maverick, Jr., in the *San Antonio Express*. Maverick was a left-wing columnist and the lawyer son of an equally left-wing mayor of San Antonio in the 1930's; both devoted their lives to atoning for the sins of the patriarch of the clan, Sam Maverick, while keeping his money. Sam was not only a notorious cattleman (whence cometh the word *maverick*, which first meant "found" or stolen or rebranded cattle) but a Confederate officer and an anti-German, upon whose livestock he preyed. As a result, Maury Jr. defended Vietnam draft dodgers for a living and insisted that the Texas Germans shared his left-wing views. He began the series by stating that the Texas Germans fought for the North during the War Between the States and that "over a hundred German Unionists were lynched during the War and lived under a reign of terror." (This would have been a surprise to Adm. Chester Nimitz of World War II fame, about whom Maury Jr. always wrote admiringly, since the admiral's father, Capt. Charles Nimitz, had been the highest-ranking Confederate officer

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in the German area and was, indeed, the Confederate recruiting officer in charge of maintaining order.)

Several dozen Texas Germans challenged the series by Mr. Maverick on his allegations. After a lot of shilly-shallying, Maverick retreated to one mysterious nighttime murder, by unknown persons, for unknown reasons.

When presented with the facts and the statistics, most believers in the myth, including at one time even the *New Braunfels Zeitung-Herald* (successor to the *Zeitung*), merely declared that the Texas Germans must have been trying to "blend in" with the Anglo Confederates, an absurd proposition when one considers that there were among Anglos proportionately more Unionists than among the Germans. Germans overwhelmingly voted for secession, and pre-draft enlistment figures bear this out. It is far more likely that some modern Texas Germans are trying to "blend in" with political correctness. It strains credulity to argue that the same Texas Germans praised by Maury Maverick, Jr., for their courage, the same people who produced Admiral Nimitz and General Eisenhower, would be so cowardly as to vote against their principles in secret ballot, fail to speak out publicly or join the Union Army, and even join the Confederate Army (before the draft) to shoot and be shot by Yankees—all out of fear of offending Anglo citizens.

While researching my thesis, I had to perfect my German in order to read the dozen German-language newspapers circulating in Texas before and during the war. I discovered that no one had ever read any of these archives between that time and mine. I also read every German diary and private letter available, every letter to the Confederate and Reconstruction governors and legislatures in the State Archives, countless enlistment and unit rosters, and every published or unpublished primary source concerning the Texas Germans available at that time. My conclusions echoed those of John Arkas Hawgood in his 1940 book *The Tragedy of German America*:

> So many fallacious statements have been made concerning the Germans in Texas during the late 1840's, the 50's, and the early 60's, that perhaps it is wise here to express quite clearly . . . that the Germans were not . . . Abolitionists, . . . that they believed in states['] rights, and that . . . a majority of them were loyal to the Confederate cause, many fought for it, and quite a number died for it.

These Germans came over to Texas in response to emigration propaganda in Germany, all of which stressed that, if you were an abolitionist or of the political left, you should go to New York City; if you were neutral or undecided, go to Missouri; if you were a conservative, go to New Orleans or Texas. Ferdinand Roemer's *Texas*, which was widely read in Germany and distributed by the Adelsverein, warned those who were radical or opposed to slavery to avoid Texas.

In addition, Germany at that time was a loose confederation of autonomous states, similar to the United States under the Articles of Confederation. Those Germans were used to a system that respected states' rights, and most were very leery of strong central government.

After 1850, Texas began receiving a trickle of refugees from the German Revolution of 1848—*"die Gruene,"* who were sometimes both radical and nationalistic. These new arrivals were not well received by the Germans who had come under the Adelsverein or before. Some of these Forty-Eighters formed the communistic Bettina Colony under the leadership of Gustav Schleicher, a friend of Friedrich Engels. The collective failed within two years, and Schleicher soon became the leader of the conservative and pro-states'-rights element in the Texas legislature.

The Democratic Party (then conservative and pro-states' rights) won the enthusiastic allegiance of the Texas Germans thanks to the sudden growth of the anti-immigrant Nativist Party, the Know-Nothings. As the Know-Nothing Party became identified with nationalism, Unionism, and abolitionism, the Germans became more states'-rights and conservatively oriented.

There were occasional outbursts of radical sentiments (mostly on economic issues) among a few Forty-Eighters after that; a few singing societies were founded for political purposes; and one German newspaper editor, Adolf Douai, was chased out of San Antonio by the other Germans because of his abolitionist views. Even he did not believe that the federal government had any business meddling with slavery in the states.

German social life centered on the Turnvereine (athletic clubs). When the National Turnvereine denounced the South in 1859, all Texas Turnvereine immediately seceded, anticipating the Confederacy by two years.

The most influential German newspaper, the *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*, was edited by Dr. Ferdinand Lindheimer. According to R.L. Biesele—the first, and greatest, Texas German historian—Dr. Lindheimer was "the political barometer of the Germans in Texas." His newspaper's support for states' rights, secession, and (through four difficult years) the Confederate war effort mirrored that of the Texas German population.

The first test of Texas German loyalty to the South was in the presidential election of 1860. It was a four-way race, with John C. Breckenridge representing the Southern Democrats and supported by secessionists; John Bell representing the Constitutional Union party, which hoped to hold North and South together by retaining states' rights; Stephen A. Douglas representing the regular and Northern Democrats; and Abraham Lincoln for the Republicans.

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No Texas German voted for Lincoln. Of the ten Texas counties that gave Bell and/or Douglas at least 40 percent of the vote, only one—Gillespie—had a substantial German population. Gillespie County voted against the secession candidate by only 52 percent. The other 17 heavily German counties, including Comal (which was the most populous and most German one), voted almost entirely for Breckenridge. For that matter, the least secessionist area, western Gillespie County, gave a larger percentage of its votes to Breckenridge than did any non-German western county. A fear, common in all the western counties, of frontier isolation in the face of savage Indians accounts for its hesitation toward secession.

Upon the election of Abraham Lincoln, Comal and Gillespie Counties called for a state convention to discuss secession, as did the *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung*, which reminded Germans that, just as they had renounced their allegiance to European despots, they should do the same to Yankee ones. All other German newspapers called for secession, except for one, the smallest, which called for caution and deliberation before such a step. Every German delegate at the Texas Convention voted for immediate secession.

On February 23, 1861, the question went to the citizens of Texas. Of the 17 German counties, only five voted against secession. Five of them favored it by 90 percent. Comal County—again, the most populous and most German—did so by 73 percent. In Fayette County, which had a large Anglo Unionist element and a Unionist newspaper, only 10 of the 400 German voters voted against secession. Of the 29 Texas counties that had a substantial unionist vote, only 5 had any German population to speak of.

Once the war broke out, Texas Germans joined the Confederate Army in droves. As early as December 1860, Lindheimer had urged the Germans to organize military companies of minutemen to "protect the rights of the South." By the middle of July, two volunteer infantry and two cavalry companies had been formed in New Braunfels—one led by the mayor, Gustav Hoffman, a former Prussian officer. Before the military draft was instituted, two thirds of the enfranchised population of Comal County were armed and in the field.

Gustav Schleicher organized units that would fight nobly in the Red River Campaign. Many of the first companies in Galveston were German to a man. The first Houston company to appear in the field was German. Most of their flags were embroidered *"Fuer die Constitution"* and *"Gott Mit Uns."*

Fayette County formed a company of Germans that joined and fought with the famed Terry's Texas Rangers in all of its battles, including Perryville, where Colonel Terry was killed. The last commander of Terry's Texas Rangers was one of these Germans.

German units formed important parts of the New Mexico Campaign, the Battle of Galveston, the Red River Campaign, and even served in Hood's Texas Brigade under General Lee in Virginia.

The ladies of German towns formed Southern Aid Societies, raising funds and making provisions for the troops. One such group in Fredericksburg alone raised over $5,000 for the cause and made countless uniforms and bandages.

There were, of course, some who were disloyal to the Confederate cause in German as well as Anglo counties. In Fredericksburg, the aforementioned Capt. Charles Nimitz was physically attacked and put in danger of his life by an Anglo-American bandit leader because some of his men had been drafted. In the later suppression of Unionists, Confederate German troops were often sent to arrest disaffected Anglo citizens.

Maury Maverick, Jr., cited Duff's Partisan Rangers as the greatest terror of Texas Unionists. August Siemering, a German of Fredericksburg who had formerly been a Unionist, was Duff's lieutenant. R.H. Williams' firsthand account of Duff's partisans, *With the Border Ruffians*, recounts that even Duff's fanatic scouring for Unionists in Gillespie County could only turn up "four or five men, and eight women with their little ones."

This brings us back to the aforementioned Nueces Massacre. On August 1, 1862, 61 men met in Kerr County, with the intention of leaving Texas. Most of them were Germans and very recent arrivals in the State; some were Anglos, and a handful were Mexicans. Ted Fehrenbach, in *Lone Star*, his definitive history of Texas, and many other historians have pointed out that this group had no particular ideology and no intention of joining the federal forces; they just wanted to avoid a war of which they'd had no advance notice. Upon reaching the Nueces River, they were attacked by Duff's Partisan Rangers, who were guided by a German, Charles Bergmann of Fredericksburg. In the fight that followed, 19 of the refugees were killed, and 9 were wounded. Several witnesses later reported that the wounded were murdered. Thirty-three refugees escaped, of whom eight were killed later while attempting to cross the Rio Grande. None of the survivors ever chose to join the federals after entering Mexico, where they were met by Union forces.

It is not excusing such barbaric, behind-the-lines persecution to point out that this murderous slaughter of harmless, multiethnic draft evaders has no bearing on the question of whether Germans were, as a group, enthusiastic supporters of the Confederacy. But, somehow, an inscribed monument was recently built in Comfort, Texas, which honors these victims as being "Loyal to the Union." A novel, *Rebels in Blue*, was even written about them, ignoring the refugees' equal avoidance of both the Blue and the Gray.

It is often forgotten that Texas was under martial law throughout most of the war. This constitutional atrocity has turned out to be a windfall for historians, because my old mentor, Dr. H. Bailey Carroll of the University of Texas, managed to turn up the court-martial records of civilians, which accompany martial law.

The court-martial trials were convened in San Antonio, beginning on July 2, 1862, continuing through the greatest Unionist activity, and concluding after the Nueces Massacre. The court tried all those arrested in the Hill Country and Bexar County. Seventeen Anglo-Americans were tried, and over two thirds were found guilty of disloyalty. Only 12 Germans were prosecuted, and of these, only 5 were found guilty. Their punishment was imprisonment for the duration of the war. Prominent Germans testified for both the defense and the prosecution. In most of the cases, the evidence was all hearsay, and even that was nebulous. Julius Schlickum was accused of singing a Yankee song while drunk. In one case against a German, the charge of disloyalty rested on the accusation that the defendant appeared happy upon reading of a Confederate defeat. His accuser could not remember having heard the defendant actually say anything; instead, he judged by the latter's facial expression. One German was charged with having had a New York German newspaper at his store. He answered that his customers could read no English, and local German papers had no European news. Another German, accused of having spoken only of Confederate defeats, explained that,

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during the week the witness knew him, the South had had no victories.

Again, it is no defense of such police-state tactics to point out that these trials show less disloyalty to the Confederacy among Germans than among Anglos—insofar as they show anything, save that no government should really be trusted. It should, in fairness to Confederate authorities, be mentioned that such arrests and trials were much more common in the North. President Lincoln managed to arrest the legislature of Maryland, and Northern prisons were full of suspected Copperheads, who enjoyed no right of *habeas corpus* (it was suspended by Lincoln), let alone a hearing of any sort, military or otherwise.

Before, during, and after these trials in San Antonio, hundreds of Texas Anglos fled Texas to join the Union Army. They were not so unfortunate as the group caught on the Nueces River, however, so they have been largely forgotten. I would welcome any evidence that one Texas German ever wore the Blue.

Once, when a former member of the Know-Nothing Party made a slighting reference to Germans, the *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung* replied that, proportionately, German-speaking soldiers were more numerous than any other language group among Confederate Texans and urged that a survey be made to determine German participation in and support for the Confederacy in order to prove their loyalty forever. Unfortunately, no such survey was ever conducted—a fact that might be the only one that matters for modern Americans, who are accustomed to weekly polls of the population on every question or opinion imaginable. However, at the time, there *was* a war going on.

The privation suffered during wartime had no relation to nationality, and the German families left behind while their men were off fighting had their share. In some areas, the women did all the farm work; in others, German families had to depend on the charity of their neighbors to survive. The well-known thrift of German families was ineffectual in the face of a rapidly depreciating currency. Indian depredations and bandit raids increased dramatically during the war, and many German soldiers who went to war to protect their homes against the Yankees returned to find their homes burned and livestock stolen by Indians or thieves.

As late as the close of May 1865, Ferdinand Lindheimer was still writing editorials in the *Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung* urging greater sacrifices for the survival of the Confederacy. Finally, on June 2, 1865, he printed a letter in German that he had received from a Lieutenant Bitter, CSA. In translation, it states:

> As you should know, our company F, 32 Texas Cavalry is coming back home today. It is true we are not coming back as everybody wished, as victors in the cause for which the county sent us, but our conscience is clear that we have done at every occasion our full duty, and that our behavior and good German honor gave us the respect of all our war companions, as of the citizens in that part of the country in which we have been. We have earned this honor and still hold it. Even in the last time of common demoralization of the Army, every citizen felt protected as long as Company "F" was near.

He closed the letter with the slogan inscribed on his battle flag: "*Gott mit uns.*" God be with us.

Egon Richard Tausch is an attorney in San Antonio, Texas.

Letter From a Monastery

by Michael J. Sauter

Engulfed in Solitude

◆

"There is a new loneliness in the modern world . . . the solitude of speed."
—Stephen Vizinczey

Br. Anthony Weber is a Trappist monk at the Abbey of the Genesee in Piffard, New York, near Geneseo, where I serve as the Catholic Campus Minister at a SUNY liberal-arts college. He was the monk dispatched to our Newman Community one evening about three years ago, after I put in a written request to the abbot to have somebody come and talk with some students about the monastic discipline of sacred reading, *Lectio Divina*.

Before that evening, I was told by some townspeople that Brother Anthony's visit to the school was something of a rarity, as the monks seldom leave the abbey. (Trappists, being a reform of a reform of Benedictine monasticism, are what you might call "the strict ones.") And Brother Anthony confirmed this upon his arrival, telling the students that, yes, seldom if ever do the monks get in a car and scoot out somewhere—the two annual exceptions being trips for blood donation and, of course, to the ballot box on Election Day. (It has occurred to me that the second of these two excursions, and the freedom associated with it, might explain his disagreement with Dorothy Day, who visited the abbey in 1967, on the duty and utility, or lack thereof, of voting.) They are, of course, allowed to leave the premises for necessary medical and business reasons, with permission. Nonetheless, Brother Anthony, 69 years old, a monk for 50 years, took his first trip out of the country this past July (with a Canadian mulligan factored in some years back), traveling to Brazil to work with formation at a daughter monastery. On telling me of this trip, which does not exactly qualify this monk as a jet-setter *à la* the Dali Lama, he muttered, "I wonder what happened to the vow of stability and the law of enclosure!"

The exception in this case, however, is one of those that prove the rule, as the "solitude of speed" is notable at the Abbey of the Genesee precisely from its absence. Instead, a spirit of continuity, tradition, and community reigns, which the vow of stability and the law of enclosure are meant to support. Indeed, as I discovered after my initial foray into convenience three years ago when Brother Anthony drove to the college, the students much prefer going to the peace of the abbey over my attempts to bring a piece of the abbey to them. And I am increasingly certain that this is the correct direction in describing the relationship between the monastery and the world.

Over the years, I have talked with many students who are quite comfortable admitting that it is probably true that their frenetic hurriedness, fear of silence, and habits of consumption represent a "running from" something. "When I sit still, it's not the fear of falling behind that obsesses me; it's the fear of getting engulfed." (That is an actual quote from a student.) The acuteness of the disease, perhaps, has allowed a new level of candidness, and I think it's possible that this near plague-level anxiety has brought forth an almost apocalyptic unveiling in terms of the images of the monastery and the world, which is the reverse of what is

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normally seen. In line with the thoughts of the Swiss traditionalist philosopher Frijoph Schuon, the students seem corporately to posit that no longer should it be seen or supposed that it is the monk who has fled the world. (Though, considering the circumstances, at both the time of Saint Benedict and our own, this would be understandable.) The world has fled the monastery.

What are most amusements, after all—amusements being, by and large, the center of our culture—but a form of flight? Think of young adults today and their connection with TV. The monks at the Abbey of the Genesee gave the idiot box a try some years ago, thinking that, perhaps, it had some potential. It lasted, according to Brother Anthony, "oh, less than a week." There is still a TV on the premises, which is used for some videos in their library and for a movie once each year at Christmas, but the "aerial" has been used in recent memory only for news on the day of September 11 and the latest on the election of Benedict XVI. Cable? No. Any new technology, such as the internet, which is used for some purposes (with Brother Anthony serving as webmaster, in addition to his role as monastery plumber), is considered and "monastisized" with a strict view to what might be called the Trappist's mission statement: "Indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the work of God" (Rule of Saint Benedict 42).

The austerity, sacredness, and centrality of the monastery's cemetery reveals another form of flight in society. The cemetery, in fact the whole monastery, is a mirror image of a world in flight from death. But I must get explicit here, because talk of the fear of death is almost trendy. More important than death—which is, in some ways, an abstraction (and being dealt with, at least in some sense, in the wider culture *via* the movement for hospice care)—it is the dead who are present to the monks and are important to their lives in a way that those of us in the world can hardly imagine. A deceased brother is recalled in the monks' conversation as something of a real presence, not only as an anecdote or a personage from the past. There is a continuity in the routine and tradition of the place that makes for quite good commerce among the generations, and between the living and the dead.

Though the monks, according to the Rule, live completely under the Rule and an abbot, the atmosphere of the abbey feels less autocratic than life in the outside world in these United States. Outside the abbey, you begin to perceive a world that makes a totem of "the vote" but which is actually in flight from a meaningful political role or, in other words, a real participation in a crafting an abiding way of life. This is a critique and an insight that I suppose Chesterton encapsulated in his usual summary fashion when he described tradition as being, in fact, truly democratic: "the democracy of the dead."

I will give my students a lot of credit. Though most of them have been worn down, like myself, by more than a decade of compulsory schooling in large, institutional settings nearly devoid of poetry and beauty, the notion of paradox is still not completely lost on them. After an evening spent in conversation with Brother Anthony—this year, we are studying the Psalms—and prayer with the larger community of monks, on the drive back to the university and away from a place where talk is more or less absent and locomotion, very much curtailed, the question must present itself quite starkly: "Are we driving toward, or away from, increased community and freedom?"

Michael J. Sauter writes from Geneseo, New York.

"What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants are the kings, Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?"

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by Andrei Navrozov

An Idle Character

The riddle of Svengali is only a riddle because men, in particular, tend to caricature their position as the breadwinning yang with respect to the theatrical female yin, supposing that what lies on the far side of the sexual divide is love, while what lies to this side of it is money. But the idea of bread, no less than that of spectacle, is so naturally ramified in its symbolism that any attempt to cut it down to size renders it sterile. The cultivation of wheat, for instance, gave mankind the building material of straw as a byproduct, which, in turn—as the etymology of the word, a cognate of *structure*, suggests—gave us brick and architecture. Straw was mixed with clay, the substance from which Adam had been fashioned, which was worked like dough and baked like bread. Clay, incidentally, is what provides the nourishment for the Merlot grape—to this day cultivated by every productive chateau in Bordeaux—upon which viticulture is founded. Thus civilization, no less than Eve, is a man's reality, flesh of his own flesh. And while, in the modern world, money may claim for itself the role of straw, there are other ingredients, including clay, that make up this reality.

One of the main points of interest to this side of the sexual divide is time. Even in the world as it is presently constituted, time is as powerful as money, arguably more powerful in its specific properties as motivator, conciliator, entertainer, and, last but not least, aphrodisiac. A man with unlimited free time on his hands is a Croesus, if only of the clepsydra, who can easily outbid any moneybags for the attention of most women, provided they are not altogether unspoiled, having just arrived from the Urals, or are not actually starving, having just arrived from the Sudan. His sundial is not gold, but on a sunny day it works as well as any. As a matter of fact, the watch on his wrist is almost certainly plastic, but what's the good of an expensive man's toy to a woman who never gets to see her husband?

In my own case, too, time was the means. I once heard it said of a man of influence that he had sought and attained earthly power through buffoonery; I was ideally placed to pursue conditional love through idleness. My various employments, narrowly ranged from the literary criticism of politics to political essayism in the books pages, had begun showing themselves as oddly lucrative, at least by the American standards of jobbing bookmanship. At that period of its development, some years before the proprietors of British newspapers, Australian and Canadian, agreed that highbrow was uncool and abandoned the costly pretence, the *Times* had been paying a pound per word, as compared with something like 20 cents at the *New York Times*.

Moreover, unlike the literary world of New York, London was still intellectually polyvalent then, each newspaper, broadsheet or tabloid, retaining an identity and a direction that ran athwart those of its nearest competitors. In the interstices, the lacunae, the grottoes, and even the occasional eminence, formed by these conflicting interests as by streams of prehistoric mud, one could comfortably nestle, expressing nearly any opinion, however extravagant or controversial, one wished to entertain on a given subject. If every writer is an aborigine with respect to whatever culture is coming in to displace his own, then one could say that, in those days, I still felt that Britain had not yet become an Australia.

All this good news saved my dignity and left me with a great deal of leisure on my hands, which I used to cook, to instruct, to whisper, to dress, to recite, to pontificate, to counsel, to digress, to propose, to expose, to travel, to cavort, to charm, to cajole, to admonish. At times I played Cupid, at times Psyche, often without so much as a change of costume between the acts. My clepsydra ran like trains under Mussolini, though perhaps there is no profit in this Italianate piece of grasping braggadocio.

Quite the contrary, if the point of literature were something other than naked plenitude, it would be far shrewder of me to have hinted that the secret of my success was some indefinable, magnetic element of my personality, adventitiously capable of bonding with some still less intelligible vulnerability in this or that woman, and to have let the matter rest there. But that would be an ogre's subterfuge, not a diarist's frankness. Yet equally, I cannot accept the contention that I was some kind of avid, prehensile schemer, in the manner of penitent mafiosi and memoir-writing *ex officio* obscurantists, because the most evident, and in the long term the most representative, quality of my character has been the marked propensity to indolence, a quality always useful, I repeat, in lovers, sometimes in writers, and occasionally even in generals, as in the notorious case of Field Marshal Kutuzov in the Great Patriotic War of 1812.

But then again, it is quite possible that the whole notion of human character is little more than a deliberate mystification, because—from what I have seen of them—people act out of character more often and far more enthusiastically than in. In part, this is the reason why the character lover, even in secondary or comic roles, to say nothing of a man reading for the part of *jeune premier*, cannot hope to find anything in books to help him bone up; indeed, if real-life personages are so untrustworthy, just how unreliable are fictional ones?

The Soviet terrorist poet Mayakovsky was mortally afraid of the sight of blood and wiped the door handle with a handkerchief before entering a room. The English cynic and scourge of human nature Swift had a phobia of excrement. And should anyone wish to argue that any of this makes sense in a Freudian way, it may be added that the Austrian pansexualist himself spent a good portion of his life chasing up a suite of dining-room furniture allegedly owing to him on the part of Mrs. Freud's family.

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Conservative Russia, Imperial America

Russian President Vladimir Putin's refusal to yield to Western pressure and accept Kosovo's independence at the G-8 summit in Heiligendamm has prompted a new round of Russia-bashing at both ends of the political spectrum. Editorial columns were filled with references to Putin's "posturing," "bluff," "intimidation," and "empty rhetoric." His "hard line" may "reignite ethnic violence," opined the *Wall Street Journal*, suggesting at the same time that this is exactly what Mr. Putin wants and warning that "now is no time to go wobbly."

Performing on cue, President George W. Bush declared—during a visit to Albania, of all places—that his support for an independent Kosovo is "solid, firm" and ruled out "endless dialogue on a subject that we have made up our mind about." This "firm response to Mr. Putin's bluster" was praised by the WSJ as "a good model for how to handle the other difficult items on the Russian-U.S. agenda."

Viewed in light of U.S.-Russian relations over the past decade and a half, those "other difficult items"—the anti-ballistic-missile shield, oil pipelines and drilling rights, further NATO expansion, the breakaway enclaves, Central Asia, the Ukraine, Georgia, "human-rights violations" and "backtracking on democracy," *etc.*—reveal a stunning reversal of the two countries' geopolitical roles.

The Soviet Union came into being as a revolutionary state that challenged any given *status quo* in principle, starting with the Comintern and ending three generations later with Afghanistan. Some of its aggressive actions and hostile impulses could be explained in light of "traditional" Russian motives, such as the need for security; at root, however, there was always an ideology unlimited in ambition and global in scope.

At first, the United States tried to appease and accommodate the Soviets (1943-46), then moved to containment in 1947, and spent the next four decades building and maintaining essentially defensive mechanisms—such as NATO—designed to prevent any major change in the global balance. By the late 70's, the system appeared to be faltering, especially in the Third World. And, as we know from his *Diaries*, only three years before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Ronald Reagan was far from certain that Moscow's expansionist days were over.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has been trying to articulate her goals and define her policies in terms of national interests: peace and prosperity at home, stable domestic institutions, secure borders, friendly neighbors. The old Soviet dual-track policy of having "normal" relations with America, on the one hand, while seeking to subvert her, on the other, gave way to naive attempts by Boris Yeltsin's foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev to forge a "partnership" with the United States.

By contrast, the early 1990's witnessed the beginning of America's strident attempt to assert her status as the only global "hyperpower." This ambition was inherently inimical to post-Soviet stabilization and kept Washington from entertaining the suggestion that Russia might, in fact, have legitimate interests in her own post-Soviet backyard. The justification for the project was as ideological, and the implications were as revolutionary, as anything concocted by Zinoviev or Trotsky in their heyday.

In essence, the United States adopted her own dual-track approach.

When Mikhail Gorbachev's agreement was needed for German reunification, President George H.W. Bush gave a firm and public promise that NATO would not move eastward. Within years, however, Bill Clinton expanded NATO to include all the former Warsaw Pact countries of Central Europe. In *The Russia Hand*, Strobe Talbott chillingly summarized how Washington took advantage of Russia's weakness. On a visit to Moscow in 1996, Clinton even wondered if he had gone too far, confiding to Talbott, "We keep telling Ol' Boris, 'Okay, now here's what you've got to do next—here's some more [sh-t] for your face.'"

Another round of NATO expansion came under George W. Bush, when three former Soviet Baltic republics were admitted—and the process is far from over. In April, Mr. Bush signed the NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007, which extends U.S. military assistance to such aspiring NATO members as Georgia and the Ukraine. The rationale for NATO's continued existence was found in the nebulous (and revolutionary) concept of "humanitarian intervention" used against the Serbs in 1999. Further expansion, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, is "mandatory—historically mandatory, geopolitically desirable."

In the wake of September 11, President Bush talked Russia into sanctioning the U.S. military's presence in Central Asia and the Caucasus, but then, in the name of the "War on Terror," tried to make that presence permanent. The following year, President Bush unilaterally abrogated the ABM Treaty. His goal was to push forward elements of the U.S. anti-ballistic-missile system closer to Russia's borders. The claim that radar stations in Poland or Bohemia will help save the West from ICBMs coming from Iran is ludicrous.

The collapse of Russia's state institutions and social infrastructure under Yeltsin, accompanied by a hyperinflation that reduced the middle class and pensioners to penury, was a trauma of incomparably greater magnitude than the Great Depression. Yet its architects—Anatoly Chubais, Yegor Gaidar, Boris Nemtsov, Vladimir Ryzhkov—were hailed in Washington as "pro-Western reformers," and their political factions and media outlets were duly supported by the U.S. taxpayers, by way of a network of quasi-NGOs.

The wholesale robbery of Russian resources by the Moscow oligarchs and the fire sale of drilling concessions to the oligarchs' Western cohorts became a contentious issue in U.S.-Russian relations only a decade later, with the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Those spewing furious allegations of "Putin's revenge" and "heavy-handedness" against the Yukos boss disregarded the fact that, quite apart from his political ambitions,

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Khodorkovsky was guilty of fraud and tax evasion on a massive scale.

Although there was no evidence that Anna Politkovskaya, a little-known "pro-Western" journalist, was killed on Putin's orders, the U.S. media immediately jumped to that conclusion when she was shot last November. By contrast, when a nationalist opposition leader was gunned down last May in NATO candidate Georgia—the fiefdom of Mr. Bush's good friend Mikhail Saakashvili—the event was ignored here and barely mentioned in Europe.

While never missing an opportunity to hector Russia on democracy and criticize her human-rights record, the United States has been notably silent on the discriminatory treatment of large Russian minorities in the former Soviet republics. In Latvia and Estonia, the Russians are subjected to arguably the worst treatment of any minority group by a member of the European Union or (with the exception of Turkey) of NATO. The demonstrations in Estonia against the government's provocative removal of a Russian World War II memorial from Tallinn were but a symptom of a deeper malaise. As Anatol Lieven of the New America Foundation wrote recently, Latvia and Estonia "have been allowed by the West flagrantly to break promises made before independence." He concludes that the most important lesson of the Estonian crisis

> is that history does not end when countries join the European Union and NATO. Given that it is by no means certain that they will have the means or even the courage to defend the internally divided Baltic States against a really serious threat, it is insane to pretend that they would defend Ukraine. For the West to continue talking publicly about further NATO and EU enlargements that will in any case almost certainly never happen is not just foolish, it is deeply immoral.

Washington views Russia as a state with limited sovereignty even within her post-Soviet borders. Chechnya is the obvious example: The White House routinely condemns Russian "violations" while demanding "dialogue" and studiously refraining from designating the Chechen child-slayers as "terrorists"; but no other aspect of Russia's domestic policies, from education ("ethnocentric") and immigration ("restrictive") to homosexual rights ("appalling") and jurisprudence ("corrupt"), has escaped scathing criticism. On the eve of his G-8 meeting with Putin last May, Mr. Bush declared that "reforms that were once promised to empower citizens have been derailed, with troubling implications for democratic development."

That a "democratic" Russia must be subservient domestically and externally to U.S. demands is accepted on both sides of the U.S. duopoly. George Soros warns that "a strong central government in Russia cannot be democratic" by definition and further says that "Russia's general public must accept the ideology of an open society." Of course, "democracy" thus defined has more to do with one's status in the ideological pecking order than with the expressed will of one's electorate—which meshes nicely with the Leninist dictum that the moral value of any action is determined by its contribution to the march of history. To wit, Putin's current approval rating of 70 percent is often cited in the United States as further evidence of his populist demagoguery.

The notion of Russia's fundamental illegitimacy and limited sovereignty was on display last April, when Moscow rejected Great Britain's demand for the extradition of Andrei Lugovoi, who was suspected by British officials of murdering his fellow ex-KGB officer Alexander Litvinenko. "The thing for Americans to understand about the case is that it takes place in the context of rising Russian disregard for the rule of law," pontificated the *New York Sun*. "Time for a row with Russia," screamed the *Guardian*:

> Russia has to learn that it cannot act with impunity. We need to make our condemnation of Russia's appalling human rights record clear . . . We need to complain vigorously about . . . the mayor of Moscow's banning of this weekend's gay pride march. . . . [W]e should not be afraid of ruffling Putin's feathers.

A similar article appeared in most major dailies on both sides of the Atlantic. Hardly any mentioned that a conflict over extradition between Britain and Russia is not new: It is over seven years old, beginning with London's point-blank refusal to extradite Boris Berezovsky, an arch-oligarch, and Akhmed Zakayev, who stands accused of a host of horrendous terrorist crimes in Chechnya. What is more, a British court accepted a plea by Mr. Zakayev's lawyers that he would not get a fair trial, and could even face torture, in Russia. Accordingly, the Old Bailey judge ruled that "it would be unjust and oppressive to return Mr. Zakayev to Russia." If Russia, on the other hand, dares hesitate to honor a Western extradition order for a Russian citizen, then it's time for a showdown and for another paroxysm of ritualized bipartisan Russophobia.

On current form, things will remain the same, or perhaps become worse, no matter who comes to the White House in 2008. Richard Holbrooke, the Democrats' perennially designated secretary of state, wants a firm response to "a series of Russian challenges to the stability of Europe"—such as the refusal to accept Kosovo's independence. He descries Putin's "increasingly authoritarian, often brutal, policies," yet cautions that, "until President Bush weighs in strongly with Putin (as President Bill Clinton did a decade ago with Boris Yeltsin), there is a serious risk Moscow will not get the message."

Moscow gets the message. It has countered American scheming in the Caspian region with a new gas alliance with Central Asian producers. It has successfully tested a new nuclear missile. It will veto Kosovo's independence, and the responsibility for the inevitable fallout will be on those who had promised the Albanians that which is not theirs to give. It will develop new oil fields in the Arctic, while Americans are paying ten dollars per gallon at the pump. And, in the end, Russia will survive, says Anthony T. Salvia, a former senior official in the Reagan administration. This former Cold Warrior now sees that Russia has no choice but to stand up to America:

> Sooner or later, U.S. foreign policy will collide with reality—it may already have done so in Iraq—and Washington, shorn of its ideological blinkers, will finally embrace the foreign policy imperative of the 21st century: Solidarity and strategic cooperation between the United States, Europe and Russia on the basis of their shared Christian moral, intellectual and cultural traditions. This is the way forward in the face of profound challenges from a rising China and resurgent Islam.

Or, as I've been saying ever since September 11, it's time for a true Northern Alliance. ◇

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CONSERVATISM

The Enigmatic Professor Strauss, Part II

by Claude Polin

Where are today's Platos and Aristotles?

On this question, for once, Strauss announces that he "won't beat around the bush in any respect"—and, actually, he doesn't. As he states flatly: "Since a very, very early time, the main theme of my reflections has been what is called the Jewish question." His interest does not stem from his being Jewish, he says, but from a broader reason: He is a political philosopher, and, to him, "the Jewish problem is the most manifest symbol of the human problem insofar as it is a social or political problem"—which means that "from every point of view it looks as if the Jewish people were the chosen people." Several hundred pages later, he repeats: "The Jewish problem, as it is called, is the most simple and available exemplification of the human problem, [which] is one way of stating that the Jews are the chosen people." In other words, the Jews, in Strauss's eyes, are the most convincing incarnation of man—not perfect men, for there are no such men, but as close to the essence of man as any man can be.

Hence, the very simple idea that is at the root of the Straussian system and feeds it with a purposeful vitality: There is every possible reason to be proud of being Jewish, as this is no *misfortune*. (Here and following, the words appearing in italics are Strauss's.) There is no baseness in actually being a sort of role model for other men to look up to (if they are capable of thinking), and there is even *glory* and *heroism* in the perennial sufferings endured by the Jews over the centuries in the name of their identity. Being Jewish is something one can take pride in, and particularly in the face of WASPs who are so eager to discriminate against the Jews and put them "just above the negroes." There would be no *honor* in trying to hide one's Jewishness; it wouldn't be so much a treason as a shame. In this respect, the creation of the state of Israel has brought about a momentous change in the image the Jews should have of themselves: It has forever restored *Jewish honor*. Strauss's philosophy is a hymn to Jewishness—a declaration of independence. Strauss is, very simply, a Jewish nationalist.

Actually, the term is not entirely adequate. Strauss's attachment goes to something beyond the Jewish people as a nation, or even as a culture. If Judaism understood itself as a mere culture, as describing a human ethnic group, or even as a nation comparable to other nations, it would amount to subscribing to the relativistic philosophy that is the breeding ground of nihilism. ("Any interpretation of science and morality in terms of race, nation, or culture is strictly speaking nihilistic.") But if the essence of Jewishness is not a particular culture, nor a particular nation, this is because it is civilization itself, the universal culture, the culture of man as man.

And this is Strauss's basic article of faith, which accounts for the duty of all Jews to stand up for what they are and "remain Jews." All of Strauss's ideas either proceed from or lead to this seminal conception. If modernity's depravity is the result of a lack of any objective universal human standard of living and thinking, it is because the whole momentum of modernity has discredited the idea that there could be men who represent what men should be. Strauss's effort in going all the way back to classical Greek thinking amounts to going back to the time when that idea was still alive and, therefore, still provided an opportunity for the Jewish idea to become incarnate. In Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy, as seen by Strauss, one can find the unique combination that is the cradle of true philosophy: the notion of a purely human wisdom; that of the inevitability of inequality among men; that of a dedication to man's essence, which results in the philosopher being forced to take over, albeit in a hidden way; and finally, an aversion to any dream of a homogeneous world state.

First, the idea of a purely human wisdom is necessary in order to contend that truth cannot be conceived of as a transcendent that descends upon men thanks to some supernatural grace but must be conceived of as an objective, yet flexible, knowledge that is embedded in some men because of their exceptional ability to achieve humanity in their own selves, which is the case with the Jews, the chosen people. Second, this very same idea entails the notion that truth by nature is not universally communicable, which is normal if universal men happen to be members of a certain nation; whence comes the notion that it is utterly naive to believe in most men being attached to truth or even interested in it, and, consequently, that it is the everlasting condition of mankind that the wise be persecuted by the unwise, which is the condition of the Jewish people. Third, we meet the notion that the wise, unwilling to let folly take over the world, must retrace their steps back into the cavern, but must also adopt biased ways to correct the mistakes of the vulgar and govern only indirectly, in the capacity of counselors, which happens with the Jews because the prejudices of the unwise against them are still so strong as to prevent them from being the figureheads of any government. And finally, the Greeks' fondness for and devotion to their city is very naturally echoed in "the self-dedication of a whole nation to something which is regarded as infinitely higher than itself, in fact, which is regarded as the infinitely highest," as shown, for instance, in a fight which should still be fought today, the fight of the Jews against the Romans—"the only fight in the name of an idea made against the Roman empire"—in the name of a past that "no Jew today can do anything better for himself today than to live in remembering," even if it is a delusion, for it is "the noblest of all delusions." The creation of the state of Israel is, whatever else it may be, "also a reassertion of the difference between Jews and non Jews." Unless the world is turned into a Jewish empire, which is impossible by definition, the world has to be composed of nations ("the human race consists of many nations or tribes, or in Hebrew, *goyim*.")

Hence, Strauss's stance against the present world.

Remaining a Jew means resisting the temptation of *assimilation*. Many Jews have thought of protecting themselves from persecution by "ceasing to be recognizable as a Jew," something that a liberal society seems not only to allow but to encourage. For Strauss, this is the wrong

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choice. Not only would it be an erroneous one, because "a liberal society permits and even fosters what is called discrimination"; above all, it would be a dishonorable one, because it would amount to admitting that being Jewish is a misfortune ("We are not from the gutter") or making "Jewish suffering"—suffering for Judaism—meaningless. Spinoza was "a great man but a bad Jew," who thought that the Jews "cannot be at the same time members of two nations."

At the same time, Strauss is no Zionist. While being absolutely honorable, while having restored the honor of the Jews by "calling forth to the fighting qualities which were still so powerfully visible in that glorious time for us of the Crusades," Zionism should not be considered as a solution to the Jewish problem: In fact, "there is no solution to the Jewish problem." There are two reasons for this, both flowing from the *chosenness* of the Jewish people. The first one is that "God has not made [the Jews] like the nations of the other lands, and He has not placed [them] like other families of the earth, since He has not assigned [them] a portion as to them." In other words, it is the fate and the glory of the Jews to belong to all nations—which should come as no surprise, since Jews belong to the only nation whose citizens are universal men, just as Jesus had no nationality, because he was supposed to be the quintessential man. And the second reason is that the very meaning of Judaism is forever (at least until the final redemption) to remind all men that they are but remote images of the perfect man—in other words, to remind other men of their primeval guilt. "[T]he Jews are chosen to prove the absence of redemption," so that "all who dwell in the world . . . accept the yoke of [God's] kingdom," as a famous Jewish prayer says. Thus, all Jews are what Jesus claimed he was: righteous men sent by God to suffer for what the unrighteous have done. It may be a dream, but "no nobler dream was ever dreamt." And "dream is aching to aspiration, and aspiration is a kind of divination of an enigmatic vision."

The quasi-theological language Strauss ends up using should not be misinterpreted: It is metaphorical. Strauss is no orthodox Jew, for the same reason that he gives for not being a zealous Zionist. While it would be wrong for a Jew to forfeit his culture, and particularly his religious culture, it would be equally wrong to reduce Judaism to the dimensions of a

mere religion, which would be hard put not to compete with others. One could call Strauss a better Jew than his orthodox brethren, because, to him, what is unique to Jewishness belongs to the realm not of faith, which can neither be proved nor disproved, but of nature—a realm available to *unassisted human reason*. For him, Judaism is only one manifestation of Jewishness. Jewishness is not a matter of belief but a fact, corresponding to the Greek teaching of rational morality. Hence, a two-sided assessment of the religious question.

Strauss is thoroughly hostile to Christianity: "There is an irreconcilable disagreement between Judaism and Christianity . . . Christianity depends on Judaism and not vice versa. . . . [F]rom Paul on, Christianity has never understood Judaism." How could it be otherwise if the fact is "undeniable that the Jew denies and the Christian maintains that the Messiah has come"? If there is such a fundamental conflict about the very identity of the Redeemer—if "according to Judaism the elect one is Israel, which never dies . . . [whereas] according to Christianity the elect one is the Christ who died on the cross"? The opposition cannot but evolve into an antagonism that ends up in a fight to the death: "The traditional Christian judgement on the Jew is at least partly responsible for the persecution of the Jews in the Christian society, and therefore, if indirectly for Hitler Germany's action." After all, were not the Crusades already "partly a simple orgy of murder of Jews"?

But the same logic hardly applies to the Torah, which leaves Strauss in a bind: He cannot disown Judaism even though he definitely favors Reason over Revelation. To the careful reader, this appears as his way out—one that he hints at naturally rather than expressing straightforwardly. "Western civilization," says Strauss, "has two roots [that] we may call Jerusalem and Athens . . . the Bible and Greek philosophy." (Rome, of course, cannot be included.) These two inspirations appear "to be in radical disagreement with each other," because there is nothing more opposed to an appeal to "autonomous understanding" than an appeal to "obedient love." But actually, "what Plato's *Laws* says about [morality] agrees fully with what Moses says," so that if "the divine law is an absolutely essential starting point for Greek philosophy . . . it is accepted only politically, meaning for the education of the masses." Then it seems possible, after Averroes or Maimonides, whom Strauss reveres, to think of Revelation and Reason as saying the same things, though one is meant to address the masses, among whom reason would only be a constant cause of disorder, while the other is only for the happy few—those for whom thought preempts deed and does not degenerate into an excuse for purely negative behavior. Neither can revelation refute philosophy, nor the reverse, repeats Strauss. This may be because they suppose different aptitudes. Beyond "the first and most fundamental division of post-deluvian mankind," the division into a cursed and a blessed part, would there

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be "a fundamental dualism in man, that of action and thought?"

This leads to another question that Strauss leaves entirely open: The fact that the wisest men are supposed to be Jews does not necessarily imply that it is enough to be Jewish to be wise. Since Jewishness is a mental or spiritual trait, is it equally shared by all Jews? Moreover, can Jewishness be acquired? In other words, who are these *gentlemen*, "habitually sympathetic to philosophy," who stand between the wise and the fools? Strauss's answer is so subtle that one cannot be certain about his inner convictions.

There is not much left to add, if one strips Strauss's doctrine down to its basic essentials, except his practical politics. After all, he wants to be a political philosopher.

"The Jews cannot be at the same time the members of two nations and subject to two comprehensive legal codes," claimed Spinoza. But Spinoza, says Strauss, was "a great man but a bad Jew." Hence, as has been said, the necessity for the wise to reconcile their wisdom with the folly of the unwise wherever they live; the necessity of "diluting natural right," the excluding of the immutability of principles, even to the point of lying and deceit, as well as using all the means necessary for the sake of wisdom's survival; the advisability of a "rule under law of gentlemen."

Where does this put Strauss on the political chessboard? On one hand, it puts him on the side of the enemies of socialism, in general, and communism, in particular; on the other hand, on the side of those who fight communism for the sake of reason, for the sake of what could be called reasonable modernity, for the sake of liberalism (in Locke's sense, the European sense). This is not an enthusiastic choice, but there is no perfect society, and the absolute rule of the wise is but a dream. Neither is it a choice based on principles: It is purely pragmatic.

The case against communism is an open and shut one. Strauss doesn't deny that there may have been communist Jews, Marx or Trotsky being the most famous. But "Trotsky's communism has been refuted by this highest authority: History." Communism was saved by Stalin, and "that settles the issue." For Stalin understood that "anti-Jewish policies made governing the Russians much easier than if one would be strictly fair to Jews." Stalin turned communism into Russian nationalism, and so have his successors: Communism has become anti-Jewish.

The case for liberal society is more delicate. On purely theoretical grounds, a liberal society, Lockean liberalism, is the breeding ground of relativism, which Strauss does not want to condone. After all, on an empirical level, liberalism, precisely because it is relativistic, is absolutely unable to suppress private discrimination, particularly against Jews: It may abolish legal disabilities put on Jews as Jews, but not private prejudice. Nonetheless, "there is nothing better than the uneasy solution offered by liberal society." For there is a positive side to relativism, which is tolerance. WASPs may be racist to Strauss; Lockean liberalism is not. For the Western nations are the only ones to proclaim in the same breath their pride at having forfeited their identity and their enthralled admiration for nations who pride themselves on retaining theirs. As was shown during World War II, the British sided "with civilization, with the eternal principles of honesty, rule of law and reasonable liberty" against those of nihilism. (Strauss explicitly assimilates the cause of Great Britain with that of the West, even though he doesn't mention the French among the Allies, undoubtedly because he considers them as mostly Catholic.) Thus, Strauss points out an undeniable fact: the affinity between liberal Lockean Protestantism and Judaism.

The hopes that Strauss nurtures about reasonable liberalism he leaves to Nietzsche to formulate, which Nietzsche does in so striking a way that it is worth quoting at some length, with Strauss. "The people of Israel," wrote Nietzsche,

> possess by far the greatest experience in all human intercourse, and even in their passions practice the caution taught by experience . . . They themselves best know that there can be no thought of a conquest of Europe [Nietzsche wrote "Europe," but today, says Strauss, we should say "the West"] . . . but also that at some time Europe may fall like a perfectly ripe fruit into their hand. . . . In the meantime it is necessary for them to distinguish themselves in all the areas of European distinction and to stand among the first . . . Then they will be called the inventors and guides of the Europeans. . . . Then that Seventh Day will again be here when the old Jewish God will be able to rejoice in his chosen people . . .

There is hardly anything to add, since Strauss, not beating around the bush, declares that these words, though ironically written, constitute "the most profound and radical statement on assimilation which [he] has ever read." One might add that there are a number of additional reasons for such liberal societies as the United States to appear as a more desirable fruit than even Europe, such as the fact that such societies seem to allow a concentration of power in the hands of privileged groups that are by no means closed, or the fact that the power of the American republic constitutes the most powerful bulwark against the enemies of the people of Israel.

There is only one thing Strauss had not foreseen: that there may come a time when the Western openness could start becoming a liability for their Jewish populations. Recently, an Israeli newspaper published an interview with a French Jewish intellectual, which amounted to this warning: The time has come for the gentlemen of France to strengthen the power they used to have over the country, and to prevent her from being so open as to degenerate from her republican identity, lest systematic persecution again hit the Jews who have elected to be French.

Strauss is the intellectual root not only of an intellectual school but of a political movement that Irving Kristol, one of his self-avowed followers, named neoconservatism. Strauss is a lucky philosopher: Not only do his disciples dwell in the most exalted places of power in his country—and therefore, conceivably, in the world—but they all claim to be indebted to him. They range from ambassadors to secretaries of state, from advisors to justices, which accounts for the *New York Times* at some point calling him "godfather of the Republican party's 1994 'contract with America.'" He is the new Hegel: The new Napoleons ride their horses under his celestial window. Neoconservatives are not an extremely coherent group: Theirs is more a coalition of momentarily coinciding interests. But Strauss has undoubtedly provided neoconservatism with its philosophical core, a doctrine that consists in spreading around the world the social model in which Straussian politics may bloom.

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The Theater of the Mind, R.I.P.

by Robert Lurie

Step back from the home-theater system for a moment and try to wrap your brain around this one: Just a couple of generations ago, high-tech "home entertainment" consisted solely of words and sounds delivered to the household *via* a static-plagued monophonic speaker. Even if you remember it firsthand, you might be starting to wonder if it really happened at all, or if the idea is just a trick: something that was dreamed up and implanted in the collective unconscious—a "Lost City of Atlantis" of broadcasting history.

Well, it did happen: The all-too-brief Golden Age of Radio spanned the most pivotal decades of the American Century: the 1930's through the 1950's. Nowadays, many young people in their teens, 20's, and even 30's cannot fathom the idea of dramatic presentations created solely for the audio realm; without a corresponding image, they are cast adrift, unable to focus on the content of what they are hearing. Yet during the Golden Age, young and old people alike had no trouble conjuring images in their minds to accompany the rich soundscapes emanating from their bulky Crosley sets. Three major networks—CBS, NBC-red, and NBC-blue (later to become ABC)—fed this "theater of the mind" with thousands of high-budget comedy, drama, and news programs. Some of Hollywood's biggest names (Alfred Hitchcock, Cecil B. DeMille, James Stewart, Cary Grant) readily contributed their directing and acting talents to the medium, and other aspiring stars such as Orson Welles and Joseph Cotten used radio as a launching pad for successful movie careers.

Of course, not all of it was really golden. Then as now, soap operas and tabloid journalism frequently grabbed high ratings. It must be said, however, that even the trashiest shows stimulated the imagination, for the fact remained that, regardless of a show's content, the listener was still responsible for creating the images.

Not surprisingly, many distinguished writers and poets quickly came to appreciate the imaginative possibilities of audio drama. In *The Golden Web: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, 1933-1953*, Erik Barnouw describes the evangelical zeal of early convert Archibald MacLeish:

> MacLeish [wrote] a sort of manifesto, calling on poets to recognize in radio a medium made for their needs. . . . If the poet could examine radio—commercial radio—he would find it had developed tools "which could not have been more perfectly adapted to the poet's uses had he devised them himself." Let the poet not look hopefully to the stage. The eye, said MacLeish, is a realist, whereas the ear "is already half poet."

Here we see the real strength of radio, and what was irrevocably lost when America became a TV culture. Radio required active, not passive, engagement. It was in many ways a true collaboration between artist and audience, and a deeply personal one at that; two family members could sit side by side listening to *Gunsmoke*, each having a completely different mental picture of what Matt Dillon looked like. But when *Gunsmoke*, like so many successful shows of its time, made the transition to television, that personal experience was destroyed. Each viewer could now see for himself that Matt Dillon was the ruggedly handsome James Arness. And once Mr. Arness's Marlboro Man characterization hit the screen, the dulcet tones of William Conrad (the actor who had portrayed Dillon on radio) became a distant memory.

As the television boom of the 50's began to sap radio of its audience, a number of shows besides *Gunsmoke* made the transition to the new visual medium—*Dragnet, Suspense, Lights Out*. Yet, in nearly every instance, the "upgraded" version proved inferior to its predecessor. W. Ralph Walters, an avid collector who tirelessly works to preserve and disseminate old-time radio shows, explains that, with television, "you no longer have a vested interest in the entertainment beyond voyeurism. You don't have to work for anything . . . and you're given fewer opportunities for contemplation."

Some stories are simply not meant to be visual. The power of the famous *Suspense* play "Sorry, Wrong Number" derives from the terrifying scenario of a lonely woman overhearing (because of a crossed phone line) her own murder being plotted. Almost the entire story takes place over the telephone, as the protagonist makes increasingly panicked calls to the operator and the police, attempting to relate what she has just heard. Such a tale could not be conveyed in any other medium. Indeed, the entire horror genre—which relies so heavily on suggestion, on what is not seen—went into a virtual free-fall after its transition from books and radio to TV and movies, a nosedive from which it has never righted itself. The slasher films so popular today are more disgusting than frightening. For true visceral terror, the numerous plays Arch Oboler wrote and directed for *Lights Out* are still unmatched. This is because Mr. Oboler understood something that has been lost in our modern era of special effects, bloated budgets, and unrestrained bad taste. As he told Leonard Maltin in *The Great American Broadcast*,

> I didn't write about . . . monsters with dripping talons and grotesque faces from the special effects department walking down streets and looking for prey. I wrote about the terror we each have in us. The woman who let us down, the man who left us, the boss we hated, the opportunity that we missed, all the terrors, the monsters within each of us. That's what I wrote about. And those things don't change.

The saddest thing about the demise of classic radio in America is that it needn't have happened at all. Radio drama and comedy continued on in Canada until very recently, and, in England, the art form still flourishes. Indeed, the popular BBC 7—a station devoted exclusively to dramatized audio productions and spoken word—has seen its budget increase exponentially since its on-air debut in 2002.

So why did radio suffer such an ignoble fate in the United States? A full explanation would take up a book or more, but the short answer is *greed*. At the dawn of the television age, the parent company of NBC (the largest network) was RCA (the Radio Corporation of America), which also happened to be the single largest manufacturer of nearly all early television sets. The RCA-NBC conglomerate decided to do a full-court press on the public, diverting most of NBC's resources (including almost all of its radio profits) into television programming, while simultaneously rushing millions of sets onto the market at affordable prices. This synergistic ploy worked brilliantly; American families,

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flush with postwar prosperity, bought the sets *en masse* and tuned in to view NBC-monopolized programming. David Sarnoff (president of RCA) and his cohorts made a killing. Not wanting to be left in the dust, the other networks quickly began to line up advertisers and develop their own TV shows. For a time, CBS managed to keep one foot in the radio camp and continued to create and fund a number of extraordinary series well into the late 50's; eventually, however, money had the final say: Dramatized radio had ceased to be profitable, so CBS cut it loose, airing the final episode of *Suspense* in 1962. Thus, a generation of talented writers and performers disappeared from public view. While a photogenic few were able to make the transition to the boob tube, the majority found themselves out of the entertainment business for good.

In America, TV had been billed as a replacement for radio—a new and improved entertainment device designed to render its predecessor obsolete. This tactic worked all too well, pushing radio out of the living room and onto the dashboard. Darren Callahan—an author who has written a number of radio-revival plays for NPR—notes:

> [R]adio is not where the American public goes first for anything. Not for advertising, drama, music, comedy, news, anything. . . . If on-air comedy and drama died like the dodo bird, it's us [*sic*] who blew it off for decades and then wondered where the hell it went.

We are a mob culture, and, as a mob, we followed RCA right over the technological precipice. In England, which was slower to recover from the ravages of war, the shift toward television happened more gradually. There, television was promoted as a new household device that could coexist peacefully with the old stalwart. Consequently, 57 years down the road, a new radio show in England is viewed as a perfectly acceptable form of modern entertainment, whereas, in America, any attempt to stage a contemporary radio production is regarded as a novelty, a nostalgia exercise.

This country's transition from one information medium to another may at first glance seem a mere footnote of history, secondary in importance to the wars and global developments that have engaged each generation's attention. That is, until it dawns on us what we truly gave up when we turned our backs on radio. For America, post-Golden Age, is no longer able to sit still and listen.

Robert Lurie's book on Australian songwriter Steve Kilbey, No Certainty Attached, *will appear later this year from Verse Chorus Press.*

COMMONWEAL

A National Championship for Duke

by John Willson

Probably, we should drop the whole Dukie mess. After killing enough trees to paper over the Western world and using up enough nonrenewable energy to fight at least a little war someplace, nothing has changed in the Research Triangle. Duke is still as expensive as ever, as "highly rated" as ever, and its lacrosse team *almost won a national championship*! And about the same number of fans paid attention to their narrow loss to Johns Hopkins as always pays attention to lacrosse.

Duke's faculty is still dominated by the postmodernist mythology of the "Group of 88."

The "exotic dancers" (an interesting euphemism for their act, don't you think?) got less than 15 minutes of fame—but little blame, no big book deals, and who can remember either of their names? They are now back in well-deserved obscurity.

The "student athletes" on whom so much attention was focused have been, according to most accounts, completely exonerated. ("It was like a pile-on," said Reade Seligmann, when their "innocence" was declared.) They will not, one can safely predict, suffer much longer.

Several lawyers are quite a bit richer, which always happens when sensational cases involve well-to-do families and fabulously wealthy universities.

Mike Nifong has been disbarred and may face criminal charges. Isn't it at least a little ironic that the only long-term damage this glitzy case ends up inflicting is on a prosecutor?

All of this said, there are things that still merit our attention, if only because they have seldom appeared except as afterthoughts in stories with less-than-noble agendas.

Blame games have singled out the players, the "dancers," the university, the establishment professors, the zealous prosecutor, and even the "culture" of a rich, white school in a relatively poorer, much blacker community. But let's try some common sense. The Duke case is not a tragedy. It has, to be sure, an abundance of flawed characters who bring about unhappy endings. Still, nobody is dead, seriously injured, impoverished, exiled, or even permanently disabled (physically, spiritually, morally) compared to their previous state. Besides Nifong, the one (almost forgotten) casualty was the Duke lacrosse coach, who fell on his sword and resigned.

Everyone acted predictably. Players denied culpability. Parents aggressively defended privileged sons. Their lawyers postured sanctimoniously. Dancers invented (layer on layer of) charges, as one after another failed to stand up to facts. University officials went into a mode of reasonable obfuscation designed to control damage. Professors invoked the holy trinity of postmodern morality—race, class, and "gender." (It's fitting that one of their chief spokesmen, Bill Chafe, is the author of a big-selling textbook on post-World War II America that is a caricature of the new trinity.) Ambitious politicians acted ambitiously. Media, all across the political spectrum, lied, cheated, blamed, rumored, and cried hysterically.

Nobody acted honorably.

And if the "innocent" lacrosse players had not hired black strippers to entertain them at an in-season beerfest, none of this would have happened. But we took it seriously. And hey, the "innocent" players were granted a fifth year of eligibility to compensate for their time on the cross. So Duke might win another national championship after all.

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by George McCartney

Jekyll and Hyde in a Box

Mr. Brooks

Produced and distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios
Directed by Bruce A. Evans
Screenplay by Bruce A. Evans and Raynold Gideon

Last month, the *Wall Street Journal* gleefully doted on billionaire wonderboy Stephen Schwarzman of the aptly named Blackstone Group, a firm dealing in private equities and leveraged buyouts. Schwarzman, George W. Bush's roommate at Yale and Skull and Bones brother, wished to inform all who cared that, when he pursues a deal, he wants to "inflict pain" and "kill off" his rivals. So there we have it. In American business today, it pays to have murder in your heart. Who can doubt the wisdom of Schwarzman's lethal intent? He's a billionaire seven times over. Can't argue with that.

There is some collateral damage, however: It's not just rivals who must go to the chopping block. The American public also must feel pain so that Schwarzman and his kind may enjoy the success they so richly deserve. American workers must watch their jobs disappear as they are replaced by illegal immigrants here or by slave labor in China. If this leaves Americans scrambling for enough to support their families, and strips them of health insurance and pensions—well, too bad. And so what if Chinese manufacturers use lead paint on the toys American children play with or sweeten cough medicine with toxins? These are the costs of doing business, and the business of business is giving the business to the weak so the rich can live safely within their gated communities.

In his new film, *Mr. Brooks*, Bruce A. Evans takes Schwarzman's business philosophy to its logical conclusion. The eponymous protagonist, Earl Brooks (Kevin Costner), is a self-made man who owns a fabulously profitable box factory in Portland. In one scene, we see him making a deal with Chinese executives. We are left to assume that he is undercutting the American workforce with cheap Asian labor, but nothing is said explicitly. (It wouldn't do to offend the Asian market.) Economic murder, however, doesn't fully satisfy Mr. Brooks' needs. It's not enough to inflict mortal misery on losers. He must step outside his corporate box (get it?) and kill them, literally. This he does with a CEO's meticulous care for neatness and efficiency, choosing strangers on whom he can impose his deadly upper-class will. At one point, he has occasion to caution a pesky wannabe who has the nerve to try to get in on his action. This scruffy lower-class loser thinks he can blackmail Brooks into helping him kill one of his enemies. With the measured patience of an executive fully expert in dealing with underling upstarts, he quietly replies, "We could, but then we wouldn't be in control."

Evans seems to have wanted to invoke and perhaps satirize the dirty little secret of American movies: class warfare. As a mass medium, film has traditionally flattered the little people by portraying the swells as insufferable snobs, hopelessly inept buffoons, or sadistic bullies. As different as they were, the films of King Vidor, Charlie Chaplin, W.C. Fields, and Frank Capra had this in common: The wealthy were not to be trusted. The villain of the *Alien* franchise, to take another example, is not really the glistening monster with the famously metal chompers. After all, the poor creature can't really help itself. The real monster is the nameless company who keeps sending Sigourney Weaver into deep space so that—against her will, of course—she can bring back a live specimen of an organism that may prove beneficial to the arms industry. More recently, *Syriana* suggested that it's not the Islamists or even Al Qaeda who need killing but the honchos at Mobil and Exxon; after all, they're the ones who are economically murdering Americans at the gas pump while bloodily disposing of emirs who long to use their oil leverage to help their own people.

With *Mr. Brooks*, Evans tries to up the ante but then bluffs his hand either incompetently or cynically. Although the screenplay he wrote with Raynold Gideon seems to take sardonic aim at class conflict, it seems to have been blunted by several script conferences too many. One of its major subplots ties itself up in knots, trying to parallel the film's main line of action but without ever committing itself to reinforcing the film's suppressed theme. It concerns Brooks' personal Javert, the frozen-faced Demi Moore, playing Tracy Atwood, a homicide detective. (Is it possible to trust a story that features a woman named Tracy?) She indulges a passion that complements Mr. Brooks': tracking and, if possible, murdering lesser beings. And, wouldn't you know it, by virtue of her daddy's will, she's even richer than Mr. Brooks. You're wondering why a woman in possession of a fortune computed to be in excess of $60 million would stalk Portland's mean streets, armed and ferociously dangerous? Please, get with the program. This woman enjoys taking down class-challenged killers, especially if they come pierced, tattooed, and brain-dead from their underclass slums. By having her pursue Mr. Brooks, the film indulges in irony. Tracy has no idea that her current prey is one of the entitled. She assumes that he is one of the impoverished goons. Fortunately, she still has time to push around some little people and, even better, blow away a couple of dirt-bag losers. But only twice, in muted asides, does Evans draw our attention to her class affinity with Mr. Brooks. And Moore never shares a frame with Costner. We do learn that he admires Tracy's decision to do what she's good at, despite having enough to live on perpetual holiday, jetting from St. Croix to Paris to New York. Sort of like himself, you see. They are committed to keeping the little people in their place—six feet under their own.

This would have been a promising premise, had Evans and Gideon not decided to tart up the film with sordid graphics. I can just hear the script conferences, the voices of the producers (one of whom is Mr. Costner) alternate-

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ly wheedling and threatening as they demand more action, more gore, more sex, and less—much less—of anything that could be deemed offensive to any interest group whatsoever. Of course, there is one acceptable target: the terminally scruffy, those who lack both the means to purchase the kind of clothing that Mr. Brooks wears and, probably, the ten bucks to get into a showing of the film. It's Filmmaking Economics 101: Ensure the box office, and damn the theme. So, after an intriguing opening, the film caves in to what American producers claim the public craves.

After receiving his man-of-the-year award, Brooks returns home with his lovely wife. On the way, Marshall (William Hurt) mysteriously appears in the back seat. He is Brooks' sinister hidden self. Marshall leans forward, a knowing smile spreading over his lugubriously pale face. "You deserve a treat," he murmurs. A treat? He means another murder. Brooks resists. He has been on the wagon from murder for two years, thanks to weekly Alcoholic Anonymous meetings where he proclaims himself an addict, prudently leaving out what he is addicted to. But the "thirst has returned," the narrator tells us, adding that "it never really left." So, when Marshall pleadingly insists, Brooks descends to his basement, where he opens a huge closet in which hang, Batman like, about a dozen identical black Gore-Tex suits. He dons one, slips on black army boots, and slinks into the night, as Marshall nudges him on seductively. Spotting a couple in a dance studio, he follows them home. With no trouble at all, he enters their apartment and catches them *in flagrante delicto*. Their lovemaking is at once enthusiastically athletic and yet carefully posed for the camera. Evans wants to make sure the men in the audience have a good view of the woman, whose body looks to be barely that of a teenager's. Curiously, we get no such shots of the fellow. Even when Brooks pulls out his big black gun and shoots the couple repeatedly, it's the young lady who is posed for maximum scrutiny. And afterward, to satisfy his obsession, Brooks himself arranges her limp limbs to ogling advantage. Marshall then counsels him to go home and make love to his beautiful wife. Does this make Evans a necrophiliac voyeur? Not necessarily. Far more likely, he's just a businessman protecting his investment by giving his customers an added incentive to part with their money.

This lurid scene comes early in the film, and, though nothing so explicit follows, it's enough to put paid to any pretense that Evans might have made to storytelling integrity. The sequence has no other purpose than to create remunerative sensation. As with all such pandering to prurient curiosity, it does not contribute to the film's theme. Instead, it throws us out of the story altogether, forcing us to wonder, among much else, how Costner and the naked actors felt about being in such sweaty proximity to one another. And why did Evans choose to use an actress with the body of a 14-year-old? Is popular culture exploring new limits? Is pedophilia headed for the big screen? A couple of months ago, I wrote about the Squirm Index. See this scene (I heartily recommend you do not) with the wrong relative, or with any relative at all, and you will not only squirm but churn with embarrassment—unless, of course, you've been entirely inured to such sights by daily doses of HBO's more mature offerings. For me, the film never recovered from this sordid spectacle.

Evans also indulges a sense of humor that can only be called odious.

When Brooks' daughter unexpectedly returns from college to tell her parents that she is pregnant, the CEO daddy summons all his executive gravitas to issue this directive: "There'll be no abortion." What a lark! This serial killer is pro-life! When daughter and wife stiffen in disapproval of his edict, he tacks like the seasoned executive he is. "A grandchild will be a wonderful gift," he explains by way of mollifying the wayward miss. Later, he discovers that she may be implicated in an ax murder in Palo Alto. Does she have the serial-killer gene? he wonders. Of course she does. Although we never find out whether she has slaughtered anyone, it's dollars to doughnuts that, if she did, the victim would have owned a Corolla rather than a Porsche. Here again, the script's apparent original intention peeks out. The killer gene is a metaphor. It stands for economic privilege. Though carrying a child, the young lady tellingly urges dad to retire and let her run the company. She can't wait to push the lowly workers around.

The only thing interesting about this film is the interplay between Costner and Hurt. They make an intriguing Jekyll and Hyde pairing. Hurt, an actor I never cared for in the past, has become a compelling presence in his recent outings. In *A History of Violence*, he played an Irish-American crime boss with an unnerving mixture of charm and menace. Here, he comes across as a cajoling, insinuating Hyde intent on luring Costner's upright Jekyll back to the pleasures of taking life. "Why do you fight it, Earl?" he pleads with a needling, ironic whine. And when Brooks begins to come around, Marshall fairly sings out, "I love what you're thinking," sweeping away any lingering doubts about the wisdom of yielding to his overmastering passion. Costner seems to have responded to Hurt's sinuous energy with a particularly artful portrayal of a man hemmed but not suffocated by prudence. When this Hyde and Jekyll fully commit to their murderous intentions, they cannot help wallowing in the moment. Heads thrown back, they yield to fits of maniacal laughter. You'd think they had just hatched an especially profitable downsizing scheme in the board room.

Such scenes give an indication of what this film could have been, had Evans and its producers not betrayed their audience as cynically as any rapacious outsourcer betrays American workers. <©>

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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Mexico Way

Though Héctor had lived all his life in a desert climate, he was a town kid whose closest experience of the desert itself had been to drive across it at 50 or 60 miles per hour. Now that he was actually living there, he found the reality of the experience daunting, even frightening. For Héctor, the Chihuahuan Desert was an expansive boredom relieved occasionally by some small but acute unpleasantness, like discovering a coiled rattlesnake beneath your chair after sitting down to a cup of coffee in the pale morning sun, in the intervals between onsets of winter wind and driving dust storms out of the west. As far as anyone could see, the Juárez ranch was surrounded by the sotol and creosote-bush desert, its nearly absolute flatness relieved only by the relatively negligible Tres Hermanas Mountains to the south and the much more impressive Florida Mountains, a massive barrier of pink and rust-colored rock rising between the ranch and the pleasures and excitements of Las Cruces and El Paso fifty miles as the crow flies to the east. Between Columbus to the south and Deming, north on Highway 11, the ranch was a fifteen-mile drive from either—a long way, it seemed to Héctor, to go for a "few" drinks, and an even longer way home.

At first, he'd kept himself entertained, more or less, at the Pancho Villa State Park between Columbus and the international border, but its exhibits were limited, easily surpassed by the Hijos de Pancho Villa collection in Namiquipa, most of what the park had to show him was old hat, and he lost interest after only a couple of weeks. AveMaría and Contracepción resented having to drive a hundred and thirty miles round-trip to shop at the Neiman Marcus in Cruces, and Contracep, who missed her friends in Belen, professed to be dying of boredom as well. Even Dubya, who'd insisted on bringing his collection of two-dozen or more stuffed lions with him, was restless and fussy. Why, he demanded, several times a day, couldn't he visit the *leones* at the Lion Habitat? They were living in the desert, weren't they? Wasn't the desert where the *leones* lived? So why wouldn't Papá take him to the Habitat *now*? The worst of it, Héctor suspected, was that, for the next five years at least, he'd be unable to enjoy Las Vegas the way he'd once been able to do.

The Juárezes did better, at first. For one thing, there were only two of them. For another, Beatriz, not being a party girl, was content to spend her days doing volunteer work at Holy Family Catholic Church in Deming, and her evenings watching reruns of *Seinfeld* and other syndicated sitcoms on TV. Then Jesús "Eddie" got a DUI on one of his solo trips to the bars, was lodged in the Deming jail overnight, and forfeited his driver's license for 90 days. Since Héctor spent many hours in his van each day, driving from one distant repair job to the next, he was not enthusiastic about chauffeuring his friend to the watering holes of Columbus. (The Columbus taverns were fewer and less agreeable than those in Deming, by comparison almost a big city, but Jesús "Eddie" had declared the town subject to economic sanctions until his license was returned to him.) With both men having to do their drinking at home, the house was unpleasantly crowded most evenings, everyone fighting over the TV while Jesús "Eddie" threw popcorn at the screen, a practice Beatriz seemed not to object to but which AveMaría (who disliked her husband's friend more with every passing day) deplored. (She definitely didn't care for the way he had of looking at Contracepción.)

In spite of Jesús "Eddie's" assurances that the ranch house was "plenty, plenty big" with "lots of room for everybody," it was in fact very small and cramped, hardly more than a large cabin—unpainted and weathered to a grayish black streaked with brown, built of cottonwood planks hauled from the mountains and consisting of four square rooms with drop ceilings and small windows cut into the walls. The place was heated by a coal stove that doubled as a cooking one, water had to be hauled from the well where it was raised in scanty amounts by an ancient creaking windmill, and a four-seater outhouse fifty yards away beyond the satellite dish struck the girls especially as an inadequate substitute for indoor plumbing. Each morning, Héctor awoke with the sinking feeling that he was back in Mexico, and he went to bed every evening wondering if he'd be able to return to his comfortable American home within the next six months. From what he could tell by watching the Albuquerque news, the authorities had had no success so far in apprehending Abdul Kahn and his associate. Héctor could not escape the uneasy suspicion that they were not even trying.

Still, living off in the desert as they were doing, away from crowds and foreigners drawn from all over the world to the flourishing communities along the Rio Grande, he felt relatively safe on the old Juárez ranch. There was some, but not much, traffic along Route 11, while the house was set back from the highway a good half-mile, at the end of a rough, unpaved drive. Apart from the antelope, hawks, eagles, and rabbits, a profusion of rattlesnakes that seemed always underfoot, and a few stray cattle, the only life he perceived among the brush and cactus were occasional groups of dark figures far out on the desert beside the sheltering Florida Mountains, trekking purposefully northward at a sustained pace. From his twenty years' experience of the United States, Héctor guessed they were hikers. Americans are prone, he'd discovered long ago, to a mania for backpacking, rock climbing, and similar strenuous pursuits. President Bush himself rode a mountain bike, which seemed to him as crazy, almost, as snowboarding or kayaking. Well, it was all harmless enough, except for his doctor urging him to take up some equally energetic sport as a means of keeping his blood pressure at acceptable levels without medication. Even so, Héctor marveled at these people's temerity. The Floridas were said to be infested with mountain lions, one of whom had killed an unwary rancher after he'd dismounted from his horse to search on foot for a lost calf up a brushy side canyon.

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Living so close to the border and Las Palomas, itself not more than 150 miles from Namiquipa by relatively good roads, Héctor had a creeping sense of guilt for not taking advantage of this opportunity to visit his family in Chihuahua. He tried to alleviate his unease by promising himself to kill two birds with one stone by attending the meeting of the Hijos de Pancho Villa next June, although he had to assume, if only for his own peace of mind, that he and the family would have been able to return safely to Belen long before then. As it was, for the first several weeks of his stay at the ranch, Héctor made it a point to stay out of Mexico, including Las Palomas, where computer repairmen were, indeed, in great demand but where also the fees commanded by experts like himself were woefully low.

That was before he and Jesús "Eddie" discovered the Pink Store, an enterprising establishment combining under one roof a restaurant, crafts shop, and general store, only a few hundred yards from the border in Las Palomas and readily distinguishable by its garish exterior and the prominent ELKS sign out front. Though the Pink Store's prices reflected its popularity with the gringo tourists, a bottle of beer, in terms of U.S. dollars, was still a bargain. Better still, from Jesús "Eddie's" point of view, was the apparent disinclination on the part of the local *policía* to enforce whatever driving-and-drinking laws, if any, were on the books. Consequently, the Pink Store was an immediate hit with the friends, a home away from their crowded abode where the pressures of two-family life were growing increasingly irksome.

It was Jesús "Eddie" who suggested that a quick once-over of somebody's computer in Las Palomas would more than cover all the beers he and Héctor could possibly consume in one evening. After that, the visits to the Pink Store become more frequent. Héctor would drive his van through the international crossing, drop Jesús "Eddie" at the store, and make a professional call or two before rejoining Jesús at the restaurant, his pockets bulging with folded-over pesos. The single drawback was the lack of a TV set—which was no disadvantage at all for Héctor, who strongly suspected that Jacinta Ruiz, the manager of the restaurant, would take a dim view of feet on the table and popcorn tossing. Jacinta was an attractive woman of about 35, whose dark skin, slender figure, and lean, sinewy forearms reminded Hector of Pancho Villa's *soldaderas* as they appeared in photographs from the Mexican Civil War.

By seven of an evening, the tourists were mostly gone, having retreated across the border to the safety of the U.S.A. for the night, and the restaurant was quiet, frequented mainly by a few elderly men seeking a peaceful alternative to the raucous and violent *tabernas* where the young hotheads looking for a girl and a fight hung out. As Hector was the designated driver on the American side until Jesus "Eddie's" ninety-day probation was up, he limited himself to four beers while watching his friend drink twice as many, or more. Jesús "Eddie," who could carry his liquor like a gentleman when he wished to do so, was on his best behavior, and often Jacinta Ruiz would join them after she was done cleaning up in the kitchen and setting up for breakfast the next morning. Héctor found the dining room most elegant with its vigaed ceiling and handsome chandeliers, scarlet painted walls hung with framed paintings and Milagro crosses, and life-sized statuary, beautifully handcarved from some wood he did not recognize.

Through the open door at the end of the restaurant, from the table at which he and Jesús "Eddie" habitually sat, a set of five carved figures about three feet tall were visible, ranged along an oaken sideboard. The figures, draped in women's clothing and wearing garden-party hats from a long-ago era, were actually skeletons, the bony cheeks splashed with rouge, the unfleshed chests hideously exposed above the necklines of their elaborately trimmed gowns. These statues fascinated Héctor. They reminded him of the Nuestra Dama de Muerte in Mexico City, whose picture he'd seen in a magazine recently. The caption beneath the photo had explained that Nuestra Dama, who held a cigarette between her gumless teeth and a bottle of whiskey in one fleshless claw, was the patron saint of sinners, to whom evildoers addressed their prayers as one who understood them and their wicked ways. Trust the Catholic Church, Héctor had thought, to dream up something like that!

One evening when he had finished his quota of beers and Jesús "Eddie" continued to slake his thirst at table in conversation with Jacinta Ruiz, Héctor, drawn by the gruesome figures to explore the shop adjoining the restaurant, came upon an entirely different piece of statuary. About a foot in height, wrought in plastic and painted in lifelike colors, it was a representation of a sombreroed Centaur, mounted on a high-stepping horse and carrying a scabbarded rifle under the off saddle skirt. Héctor recognized the image at once. It was modeled from his favorite Pancho Villa photo, a copy of which hung above his desk in his study at home in Belen. It was an obvious work of art—for him, a must-have item. He picked up the statue and turned it over, thinking to find a price tag stuck on the base. Seeing nothing, he carried the figure along with him to the restaurant.

"*¿Cuánta cuesta?*" he asked Jacinta Ruiz.

She glanced at the statue contemptuously.

"Fifteen pesos, if you think it worth so much. For me, it is the ugliest thing I ever saw."

Héctor was shocked. "But it is made from one of the most famous photos of Pancho ever taken!"

Jacinta Ruiz stood her ground. "It is ugly because the man himself was ugly, *un monstruo*," she insisted. "My family has lived in Palomas almost one hundred years. May Pancho Villa rot in Hell for what he did at Columbus!"

"But—you yourself are *Méxicana*!"

"Yes I am *Méxicana*, and proudly so." Jacinta drew the sleeves of her silk blouse over her wrists and patted the silver brooch at her throat. "But my great-grandmother, Mathilde Saenz, had many American friends, among them Maude Wright and her husband. You know who was Maude Wright, *Señor*?"

Héctor was not a paid-up Life Member of Hijos de Pancho Villa for nothing.

"Wasn't she the wife of the gringo rancher in México Pancho murd—I mean, killed on his way to attack Camp Furlong?" he ventured. "He kept her with his army until after the attack, and then released her."

"*Exacto*. Also, Maude was my grandmother's closest friend. The Saenzes and the Wrights owned neighboring ranches. Mathilde never forgave Villa for what he did to Maude and her husband—shooting him in cold blood on the steps of his own house! She always said a savage like Pancho Villa ought to have been shot in the back by his own soldiers."

Jacinta Ruiz snapped a red-painted forenail against the plastic figure. "Only the gringo tourists are interested in Pancho Villa," she concluded. "We sell thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of Villa stuff every year. It is like a sickness with them, as far as I'm concerned." <©>

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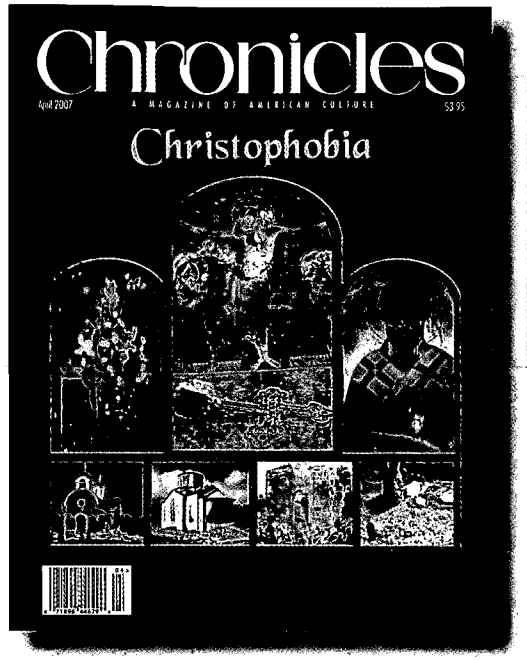

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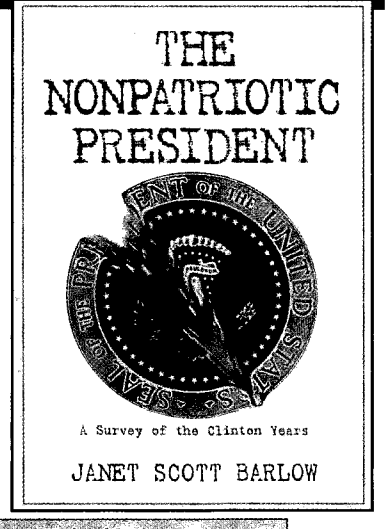

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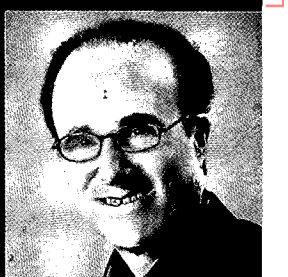

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